ONWARD TOWARDS OUR NOBLE DEATHS

SHIGERU MIZUKI

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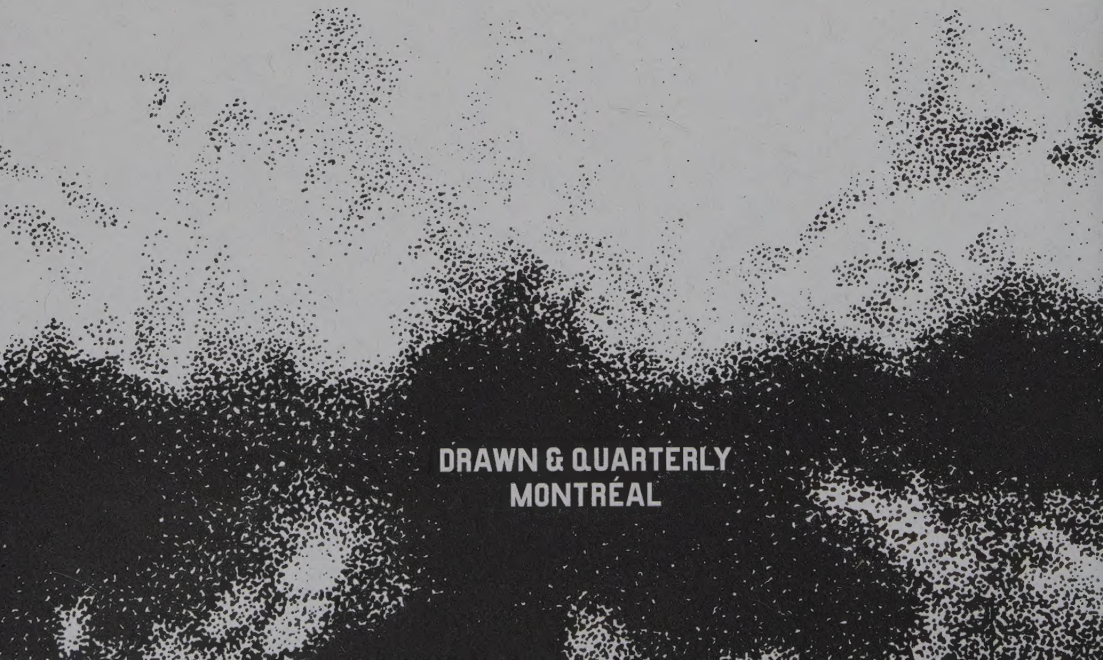
TRANSLATION BY
JOCELYNE ALLEN



DRAWN & QUARTERLY
MONTRÉAL

総員玉砕せよ！

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INTRODUCTION

FREDERIK L. SCHODT

When I heard that one of Shigeru Mizuki's stories was about to be published in English, my first thought was: Finally! There has been an explosion in the number of translated manga titles in the last twenty years—so much so that some fans can be forgiven for thinking they now have access to most everything ever published in Japan. But there are still many famous works with a universal quality, done by extraordinarily talented artists which, for various and mysterious reasons, remain unknown in North America. Foremost among them until recently, to my way of thinking, has been the work of Shigeru Mizuki.

As I write this, Shigeru Mizuki is nearly ninety years old, living on the outskirts of Tokyo. Unlike most artists, whose auras start to fade with the passing years, he has only grown brighter, as new generations discover his work, and older generations discover new aspects of the man they thought they knew so well. Among the pantheon of legendary manga artists in Japan, Mizuki stands out not only for his longevity, but also for his originality. When discussing him, critics rarely talk about how he resembles other artists because it is difficult to compare him to anyone else. He started drawing manga before most artists alive today were born, and he has already outlived many pioneering (and younger) luminaries of manga's golden age, such as Osamu Tezuka, Fujiko F. Fujio, and Shôtarô Ishinomori.

Mizuki was born Shigeru Mura in 1922, and raised on the isolated western seaboard of Japan. He exhibited a precocious drawing ability as a child. Much later, after the war, he briefly attended the prestigious Musashino Art University in Tokyo, but he fortunately did not become mired in artistic orthodoxy. Today one of the hallmarks of many of his manga stories is his use of highly realistic, detailed backgrounds, while rendering human characters in quirky, "cartoony" shapes.

From an early age, Mizuki had a voracious curiosity about the world and about life, and an independent streak. As a child, a local woman he called *non-non bâ*, or "Auntie Non-non," often took care of him, and helped him develop a passionate interest in the spirit world, especially in local tales of *yôkai*. Sometimes translated as goblins and ghosts in the animistic world view of Japanese people, *yôkai* often resemble the trolls of northern Europe, for they are closely linked with local natural phenomena and objects. Mizuki would eventually make *yôkai* his trademark manga subjects, and become Japan's foremost *yôkai* popularizer. As a self-declared *yôkai* researcher, he would also look beyond Japan, and travel to exotic locales around the world to learn about the supernatural beliefs of other cultures.

In the early postwar period, before entering the manga mainstream, Mizuki worked for a time drawing for the *kamishibai* or "paper-play" market—an inexpensive form of street entertainment in the days before television wherein raconteurs embroidered tales with a sequence of illustrated panels. *Kamishibai* have largely vanished from modern Japan, but there is currently a renewed interest in their connection to modern manga. Not coincidentally,

his detachment was completely wiped out in an attack by Australians and native forces. Mizuki made a harrowing escape alone back to Japanese lines, only to be reprimanded by his superiors for losing his rifle, and (in Imperial Army style) for surviving. He later lost his arm during a raid by Allied airplanes, when he was badly wounded. After lingering on the verge of death, and battling malaria, he was eventually nursed back to health.

During this time Mizuki developed a deep affection for the natives of New Guinea, and he claims to have realized that a spirit force was guiding his life. Had he not been out of commission, he probably would not have survived the war. In a fairly famous incident, a unit to which he would have been attached was sent out on a *banzai* [suicide] charge, but miraculously survived. Since the men's "glorious death" had already been reported to headquarters, it was sent back to the front with orders not to return alive.

These personal experiences provide the real punch for Mizuki's war stories, which are far less well known in Japan than his *yôkai* work. Many have an anti-war theme, commiserate with the plight of the average soldier, and may be a way for him to exorcize his own personal demons. The same burning spirit also pervades a remarkable 2000-page manga documentary work that he created in 1994 about Japan's turbulent and controversial history during the reign of Emperor Hirohito from 1925–1989.

Of Mizuki's war stories, I have always believed that this 1973 *gekiga*, *Sôin Gyokusai Seyo!* [Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths] is one of his best. It is Mizuki's own telling, in dramatic manga style, of the fate of the aforementioned doomed unit in New Guinea. In the story's gruesome detail, in the contrast between realistic and "cartoony" art, and in Mizuki's obvious anger over the way arrogant officers squandered the lives of their men, I think it is one of the most powerful anti-war comics ever created.

And I am overjoyed that Drawn & Quarterly has decided to publish it.

Frederik L. Schodt
February 2011
San Francisco, California

Frederik L. Schodt has written extensively on the subject of Japanese cartooning. His books include *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*, *Dreamland Japan*, and *The Astro Boy Essays*. As a translator, he has worked on English-language editions of titles such as *Barefoot Gen*, *Astro Boy*, *Phoenix*, *Ghost in the Shell*, and *The Four Immigrants Manga*. In 2009, he was awarded the Japanese Government's Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs International Manga Award for helping to promote Japanese popular culture overseas.

Mizuki and some of his *kamishibai* work was recently introduced in the United States in 2010, in Eric P. Nash's lavishly illustrated book, *Manga Kamishibai*. But Mizuki also drew stories for the manga pay-library market—a series of for-profit libraries that lent manga (and books) for a small fee to entertainment-starved readers. His debut work, published in paperback form in 1957 when he was already thirty-three years old, was titled *Rocketman*.

Mizuki's first real commercial success came around 1965, when he drew a story for boys called *Terebi-kun* [TV kid], about a young boy who discovers how to enter his TV set, steal the products displayed on commercials and give them to his poorer, real-world friends. And thereafter, Mizuki began to win the hearts of Japan, especially with his *yôkai* stories. He drew heavily on Japanese spirit traditions, but the paranormal world he depicted was completely his own, and the *yôkai* that populated it were, rather than scary, remarkably bizarre and endearing. Kitarô, his most famous creation, in the series *Ge ge ge no Kitarô* [Kitarô the Spooky], was born of a family of ghost-goblins, the last of their kind on earth, who live among ordinary humans. His parents "die," but the father's eyeball survives (with little arms and legs) and becomes Kitarô's guardian. Kitarô has only one eye, so the father's eye sometimes hides in Kitarô's eye socket. Children absolutely loved this weirdness, and as a result *Ge ge ge no Kitarô* was animated for television in 1968. Today, it is probably safe to say, that in the minds of most young Japanese, Mizuki's *yôkai* characters and stories have supplanted the original folk-tales and legends that inspired them. It would be hard to exaggerate their popularity.

In 2009, I finally visited Sakaiminato, the little town on the Japan Sea coast where Mizuki grew up. Here, he has been nearly deified, for the train line that runs between the Yonago city and Sakaiminato is now named after his *yôkai* characters and decorated with their images. And in the town of Sakaiminato there is a section called "Mizuki Road," where the street is lined with over a hundred bronze statues of his *yôkai* characters, a museum dedicated to him, and stores selling Mizuki and *yôkai*-themed trinkets. There is even a bronze statue of Mizuki himself, with one of his more famous and typically idiosyncratic recommendations to the world: "Be lazy."

Fascination with Mizuki and his characters has been propelled in recent years by two television series broadcast on the public channel, NHK. The first was an award-winning series in 1991 and 1992, based on one of his stories about "Auntie Non-non," who taught him about the spirit world. The second aired in 2010 and was also hugely popular. Titled *Ge ge ge no nyôbô* [Ge ge ge's wife], it was based on a book by his wife, about her life with her unusual husband.

Yet no matter how popular and commercialized Mizuki and his *yôkai* world becomes, he always stands apart from other successful manga artists. In large part, this is because of his life experience. Mizuki was an active combatant in World War II, and this fact is always driven home upon meeting him because his left arm is missing.

Mizuki was drafted into the Imperial Army in 1943 and sent to Rabaul, on the island of New Britain, in what is now part of Papua New Guinea. It was one of the worst places to be sent in the war, and quickly became a showcase for some of the worst aspects of the Imperial Army. As one of the lower-ranking, late arrivals in a hierarchical and feudalistic command structure, Mizuki was constantly beaten by his superiors. While on sentry duty in the field one day,

CHARACTERS

PLATOON LEADER MIZUMOTO
SECOND LIEUTENANT

COMPANY COMMANDER
CAPTAIN

BATTALION COMMANDER TADOKORO
MAJOR

HONDA, LEADER OF SQUAD NO. 3
SERGEANT

KAWAKITA, LEADER OF SQUAD NO. 2
CORPORAL

YOSHIDA, LEADER OF SQUAD NO. 1
CORPORAL

MARUYAMA
PRIVATE SECOND CLASS

NOGAMI
ACTING CORPORAL

OKUYAMA, LEADER OF SQUAD NO. 4
LANCE-CORPORAL

HOMU
MILITARY POLICE LIEUTENANT

KITAZAKI, LEADER OF PLATOON NO. 3 SECOND LIEUTENANT

YAMAGISHI, LEADER OF PLATOON NO. 1 SECOND LIEUTENANT

DIVISION COMMANDER
LIEUTENANT-GENERAL

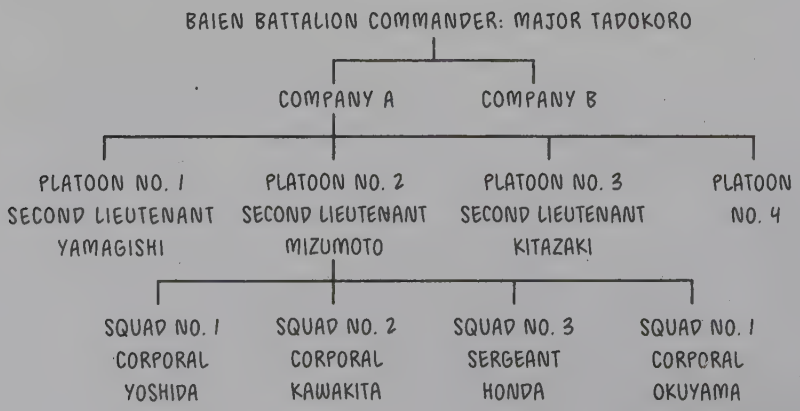
CHIEF OF STAFF
COLONEL

KIDO, STAFF
LIEUTENANT-COLONEL

DR. ISHIYAMA
MEDICAL LIEUTENANT

KIRIMOTO
PRIVATE FIRST CLASS

MORITA
PRIVATE FIRST CLASS



MIURA
PRIVATE SECOND CLASS

KAGEYAMA
PRIVATE SECOND CLASS

YOKOI
CORPORAL

OGAWA
PRIVATE FIRST CLASS

CORPSMAN KAMIYA
ACTING CORPORAL

KAYAMA
PRIVATE SECOND CLASS

KOBAYASHI
PRIVATE SECOND CLASS

NAKAMOTO
PRIVATE SECOND CLASS

SAKAIDA
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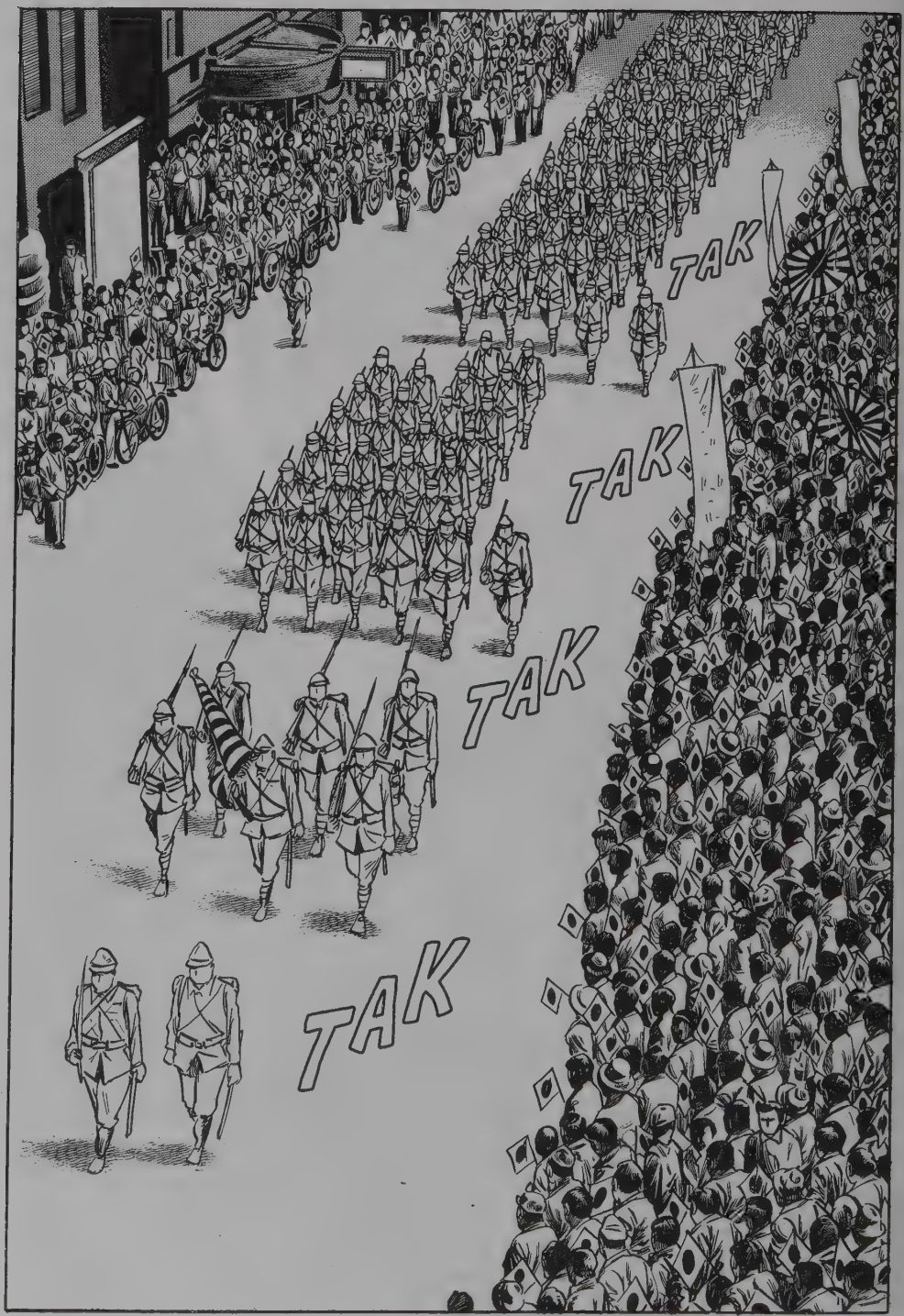
AKASAKI
PRIVATE SECOND CLASS

KOJIMA
PRIVATE FIRST CLASS

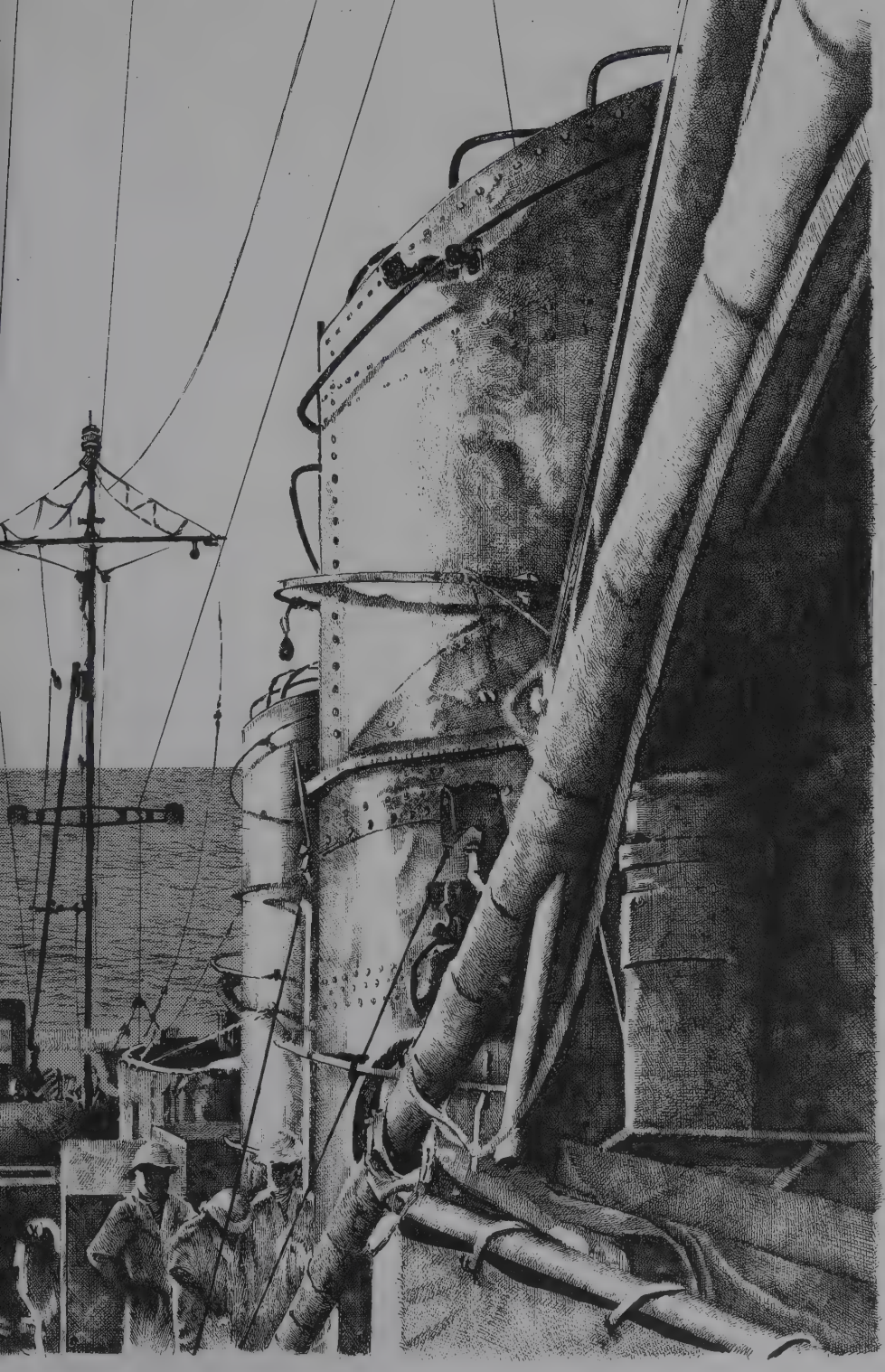
KANEDA
PRIVATE FIRST CLASS

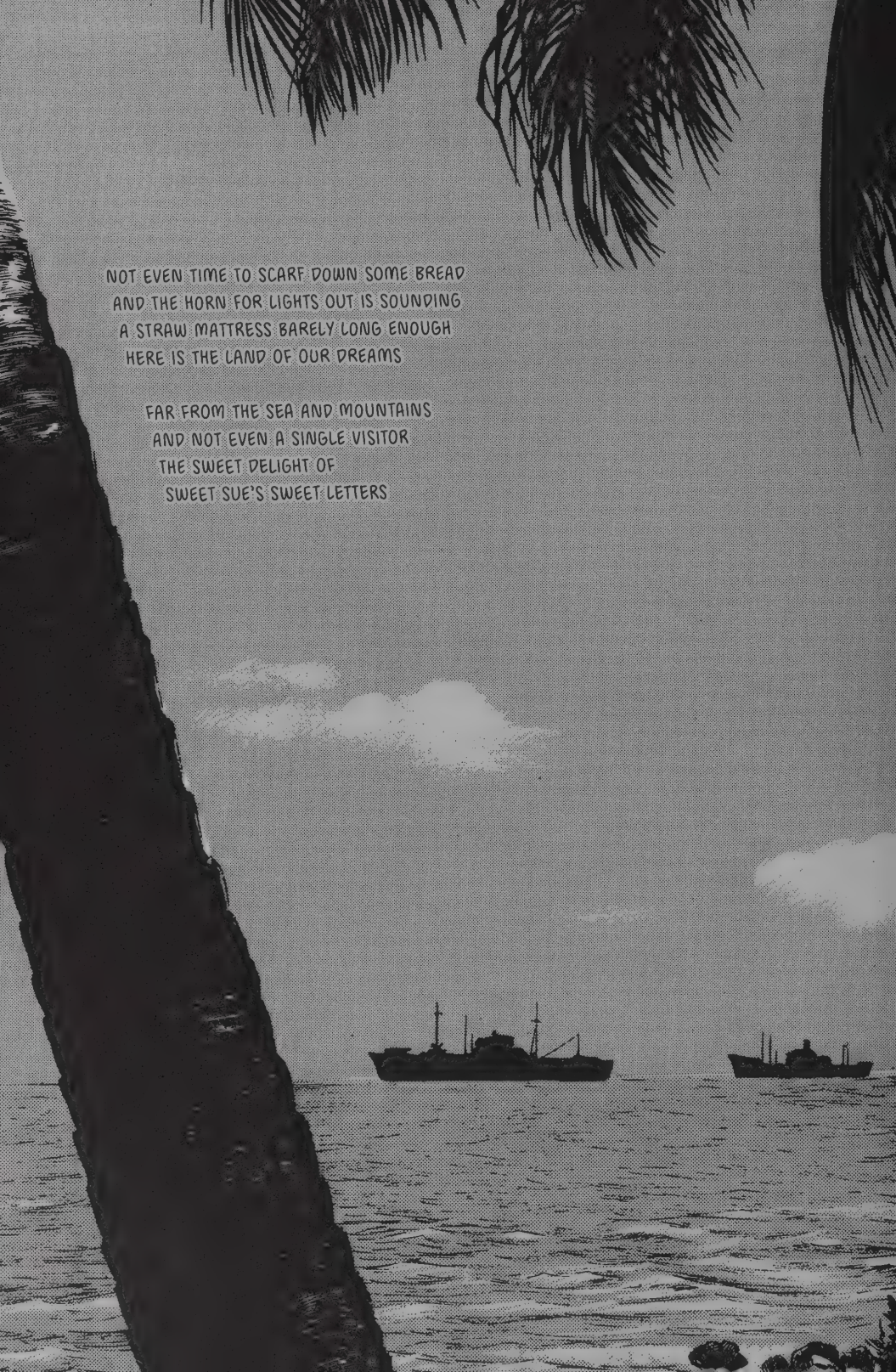

TAK
TAK
TAK
TAK

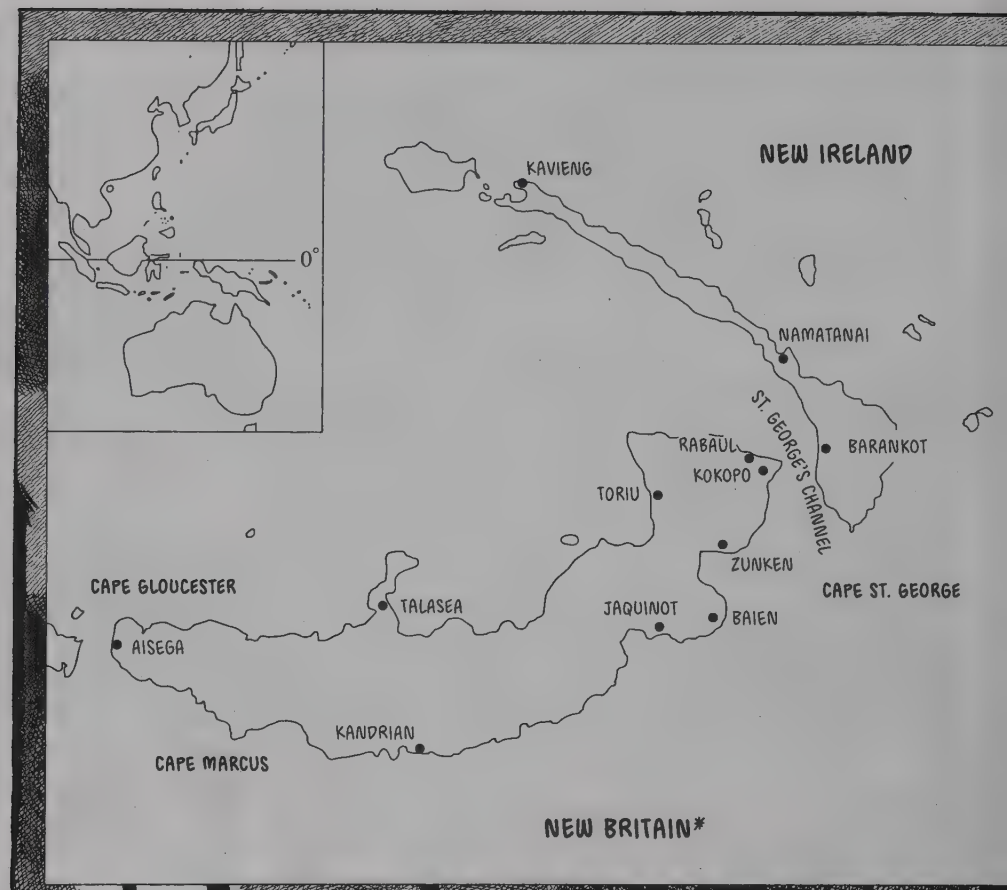
SAYING IT'S FOR THE GOOD OF OUR COUNTRY
FOOL VOLUNTEERING
FOR THAT ROTTEN ARMY
LEAVING SWEET SUE BEHIND IN TEARS

FORCED AWAKE AT THE CRACK OF DAWN
SWABBING AND SWEEPING
PUSHED AROUND BY FOOLS ABOVE HIM
LONG DAYS SPENT IN TEARS*

*LYRICS FROM A JAPANESE WAR SONG, "KAWAII SU-CHAN."




NOT EVEN TIME TO SCARF DOWN SOME BREAD
AND THE HORN FOR LIGHTS OUT IS SOUNDING
A STRAW MATTRESS BARELY LONG ENOUGH
HERE IS THE LAND OF OUR DREAMS
FAR FROM THE SEA AND MOUNTAINS
AND NOT EVEN A SINGLE VISITOR
THE SWEET DELIGHT OF
SWEET SUE'S SWEET LETTERS

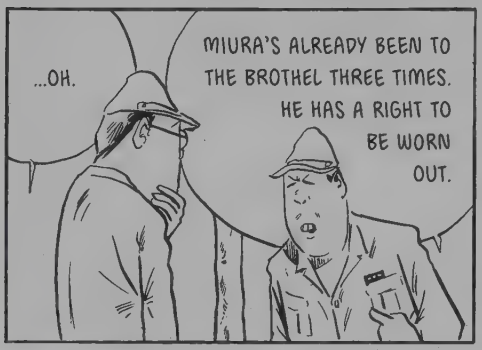


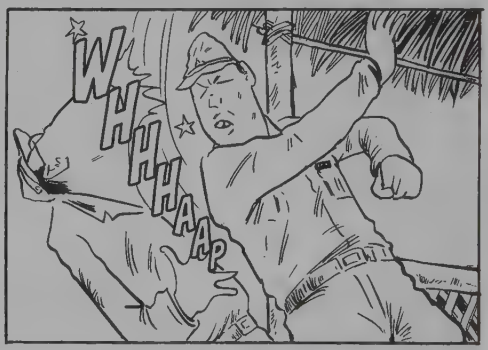
*NEW BRITAIN IS AN ISLAND IN THE PAPUA NEW GUINEAN ARCHIPELAGO.

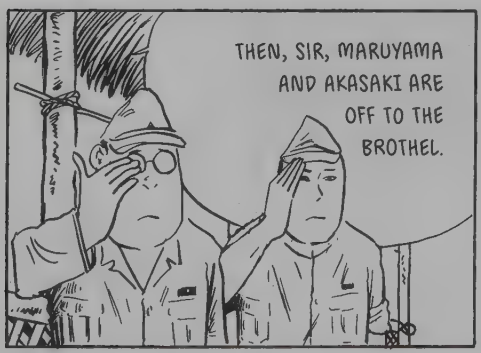
KOKOPO, NEW BRITAIN

END OF 1943

SON OF A BITCH!
WHAT D'YA MEAN, MIURA'S STILL HERE?


...OH.
MIURA'S ALREADY BEEN TO THE BROTHEL THREE TIMES. HE HAS A RIGHT TO BE WORN OUT.

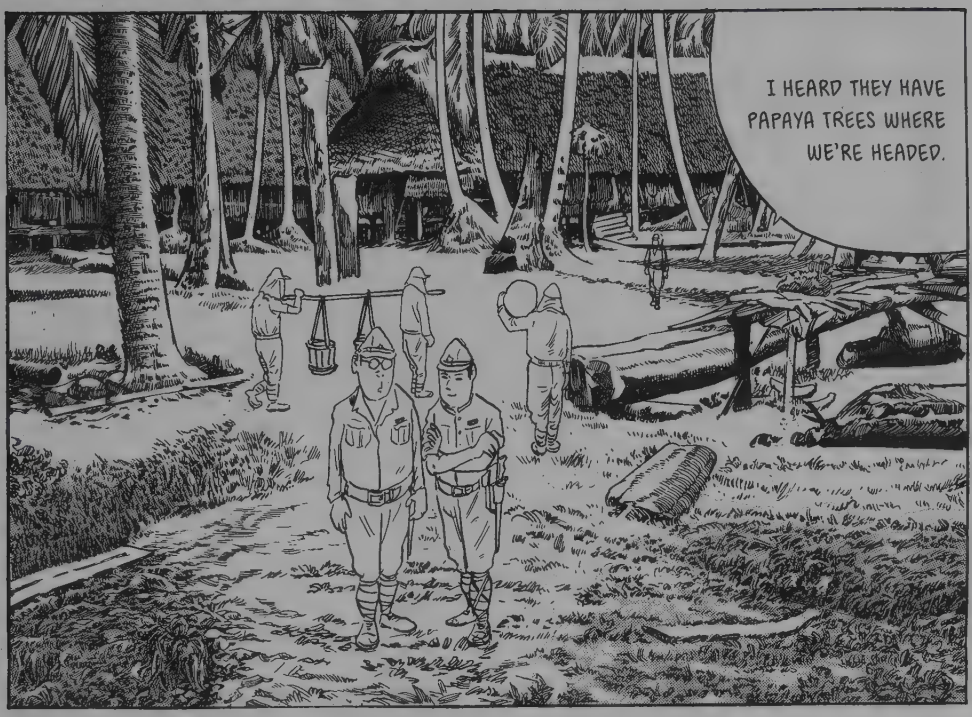

WHHHAAP


THEN, SIR, MARUYAMA AND AKASAKI ARE OFF TO THE BROTHEL.

YES, SIR.
WHEN I TELL YOU TO GO, YOU GO. THE PLACE'S OPEN 'TIL FIVE.

SHIT, JUST FIVE MINUTES 'TIL THEY CLOSE.
THE ONLY DAY WE GET OFF AND WE'RE RUNNING AROUND.

GOOD.

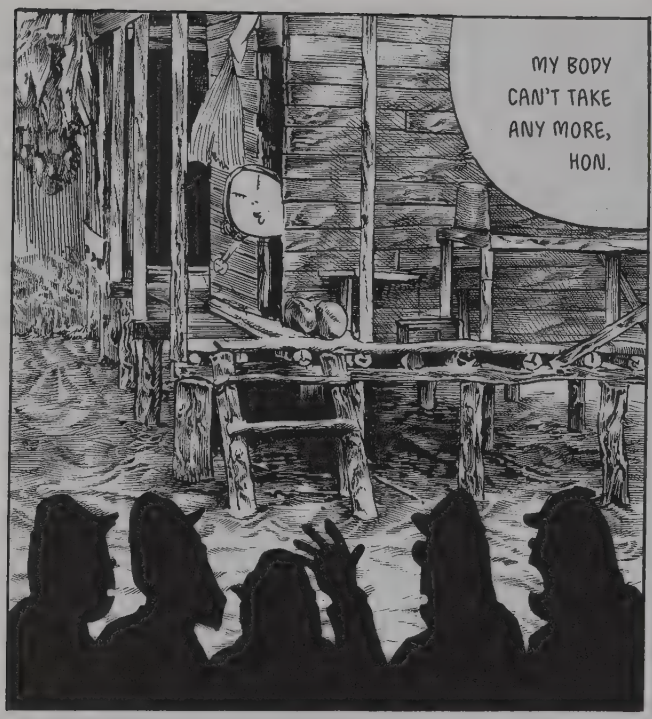

I HEARD THEY HAVE PAPAYA TREES WHERE WE'RE HEADED.

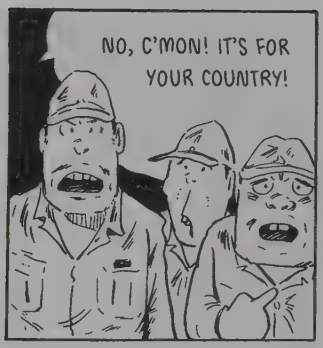
OH, CORPORAL NOGAMI!
HEY! WHAT ARE YOU GUYS DOING?

I ALWAYS WANTED TO GO SOMEWHERE LIKE THAT.
I GUESS IT'S LIKE HEAVEN THERE.

BUT MIURA'S STILL HERE.
EVERYONE?

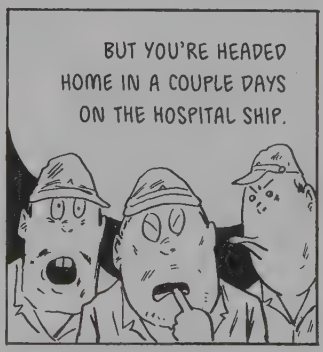
GO ON, GET OVER THERE.
EVERYONE ELSE'S GONE TO THE BROTHEL.


MY BODY CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE, HON.

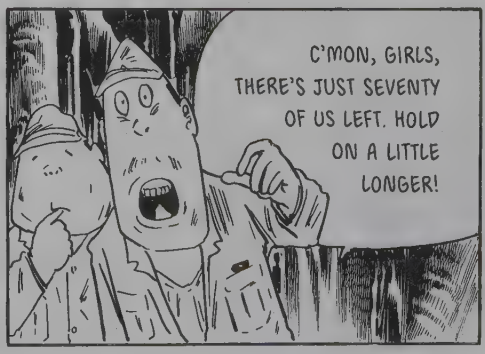

NO, C'MON! IT'S FOR YOUR COUNTRY!

STAY OPEN A LITTLE LONGER!

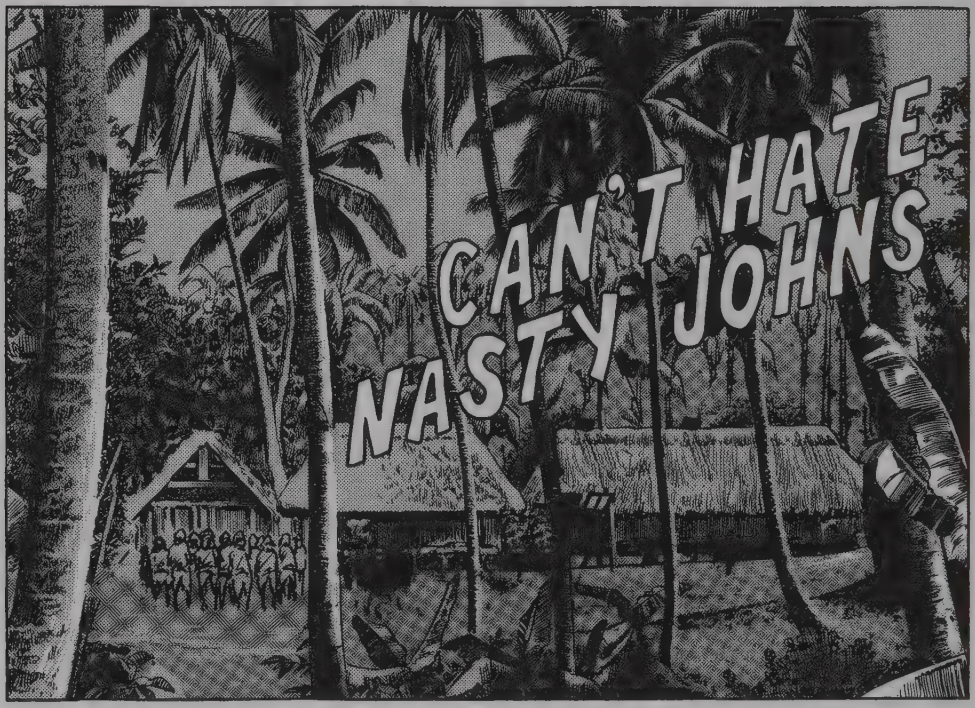
WE HAVE TO STAY ON THIS ISLAND AND DIE, YOU KNOW!


BUT YOU'RE HEADED HOME IN A COUPLE DAYS ON THE HOSPITAL SHIP.

HEH HEH HEH HEH
I'LL JUST TOUCH, OKAY?


C'MON, GIRLS, THERE'S JUST SEVENTY OF US LEFT. HOLD ON A LITTLE LONGER!

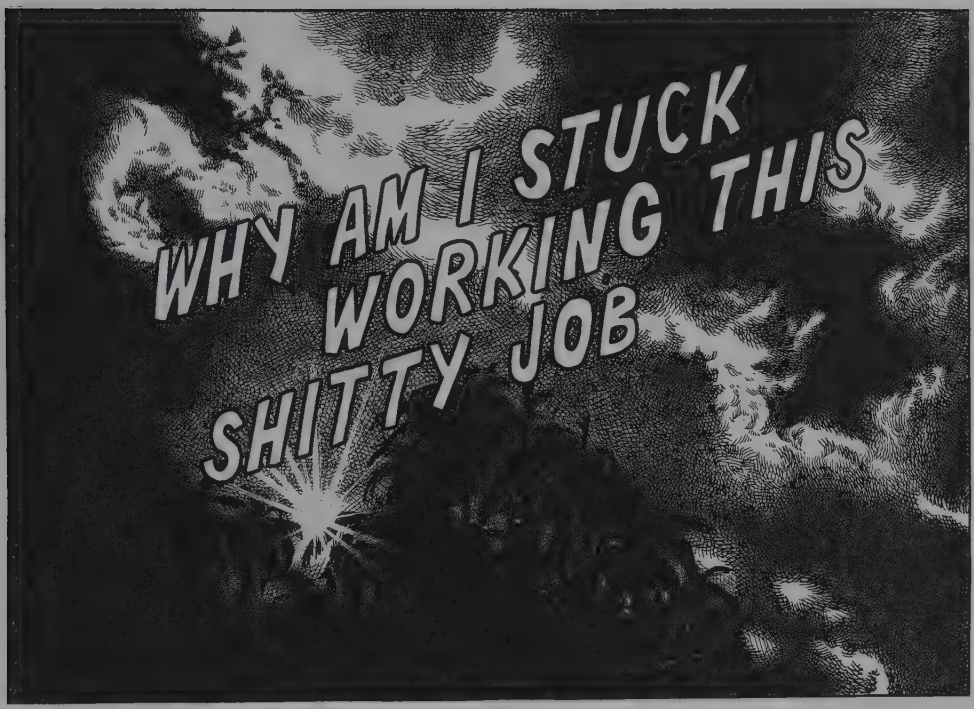
LOOK AT THIS LINE!
HEY! HURRY UP IN THERE!
WE'LL BE HERE ALL NIGHT.
GUYS, IT'S FIVE NOW, SO WE'RE CLOSED FOR THE DAY.
THIRTY SECONDS PER PERS-ON, YOU KNOW!


CAN'T HATE
NASTY JOHNS

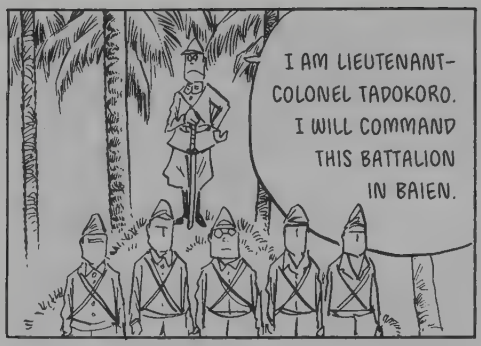
FORCED SMILES
FOR SMUG PIMPS

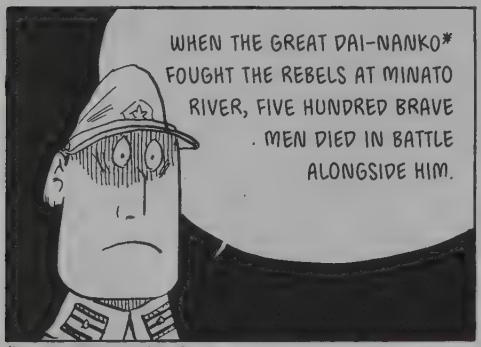
HEH HEH HEH HEH
I'LL JUST LICK.
I AM*
*"PROSTITUTE'S LAMENT" WAS SUNG BY SOLDIERS DURING THE WAR; NO RECORDINGS OF IT REMAIN.
ALL TOGETHER!
A BLOSSOM THAT FALLS IN THE RED LIGHT DISTRICT
WILTING IN THE DAY BLOOMING AT NIGHT

MOST OF US GOT NOTHING BUT THE "PROSTITUTE'S LAMENT."
FIVE MINUTES LEFT— MAYBE TWO OR THREE GUYS COULD'VE GOTTEN SOME, BUT SEVENTY OR SO WERE WAITING THERE.
...SAY, HOW WAS IT YESTERDAY?
HUH, TOO BAD.
BUT MIURA, YOU DID IT THREE TIMES!
ME, TOO.
NOW YOU'LL DIE A VIRGIN.
YOU HAD YOUR HEAD STUCK UP YOUR ASS.
FALL IN!
I DIDN'T GO THREE TIMES.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

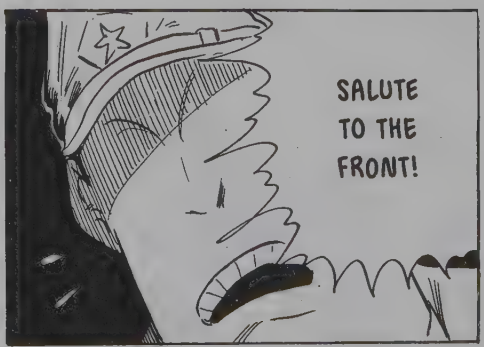

WHY AM I STUCK WORKING THIS SHITTY JOB

NO WAY OUT ALL FOR MY PARENTS

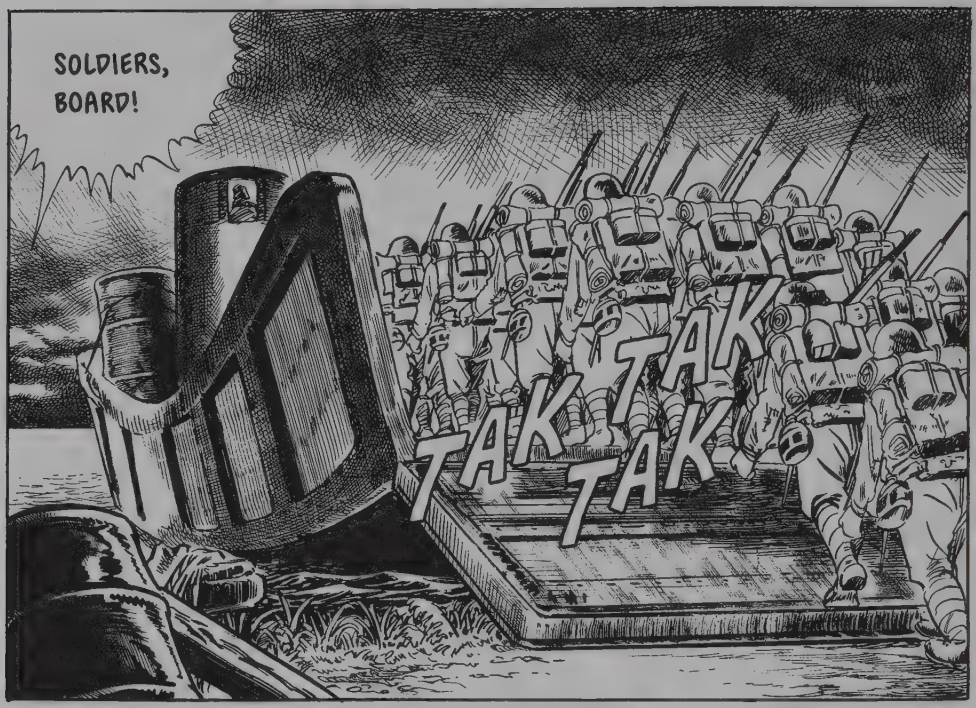




*SEE NOTES PAGE 366.

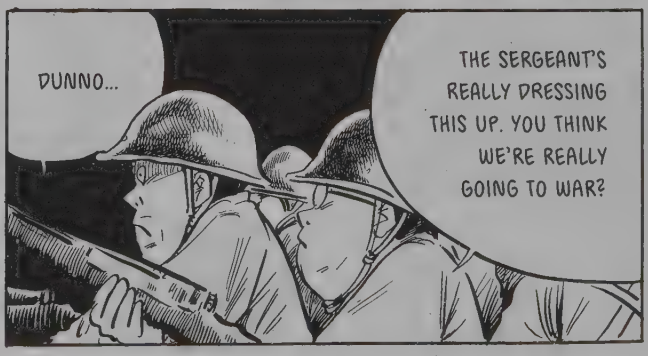


I THOUGHT WE WERE SHIPPING OUT.
NUMBERS!
TWO!
ONE!
THE COLONEL'S CALLED EVERYONE IN. MOVE OUT!
SALUTE TO THE FRONT!
SALUTE!
ATTEN-TION!


SOLDIERS, BOARD!
TAK TAK TAK TAK

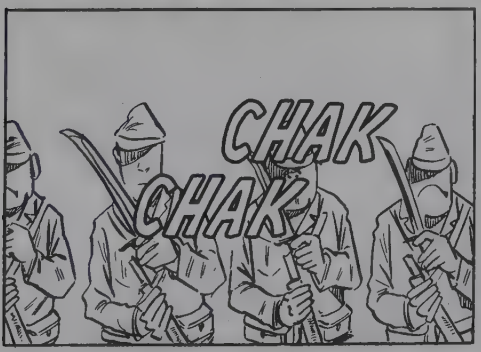
SET SAIL!!

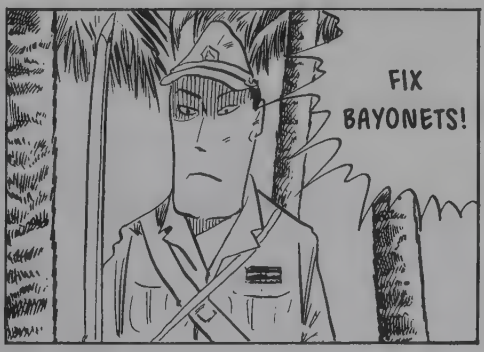
WE'RE PROB'LY GOING FOR A REASON.

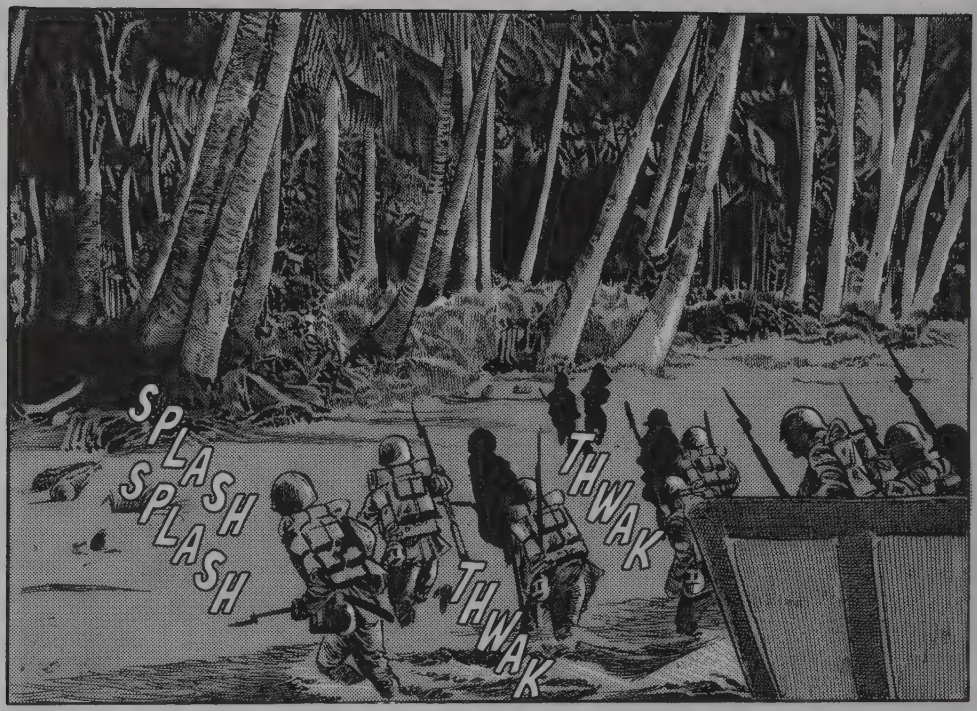

DUNNO...
THE SERGEANT'S REALLY DRESSING THIS UP. YOU THINK WE'RE REALLY GOING TO WAR?

KLAK
KLAK
PRESENT ARMS!

OUR PLATOON WILL OCCUPY BAIEN AS THE ADVANCE PARTY.

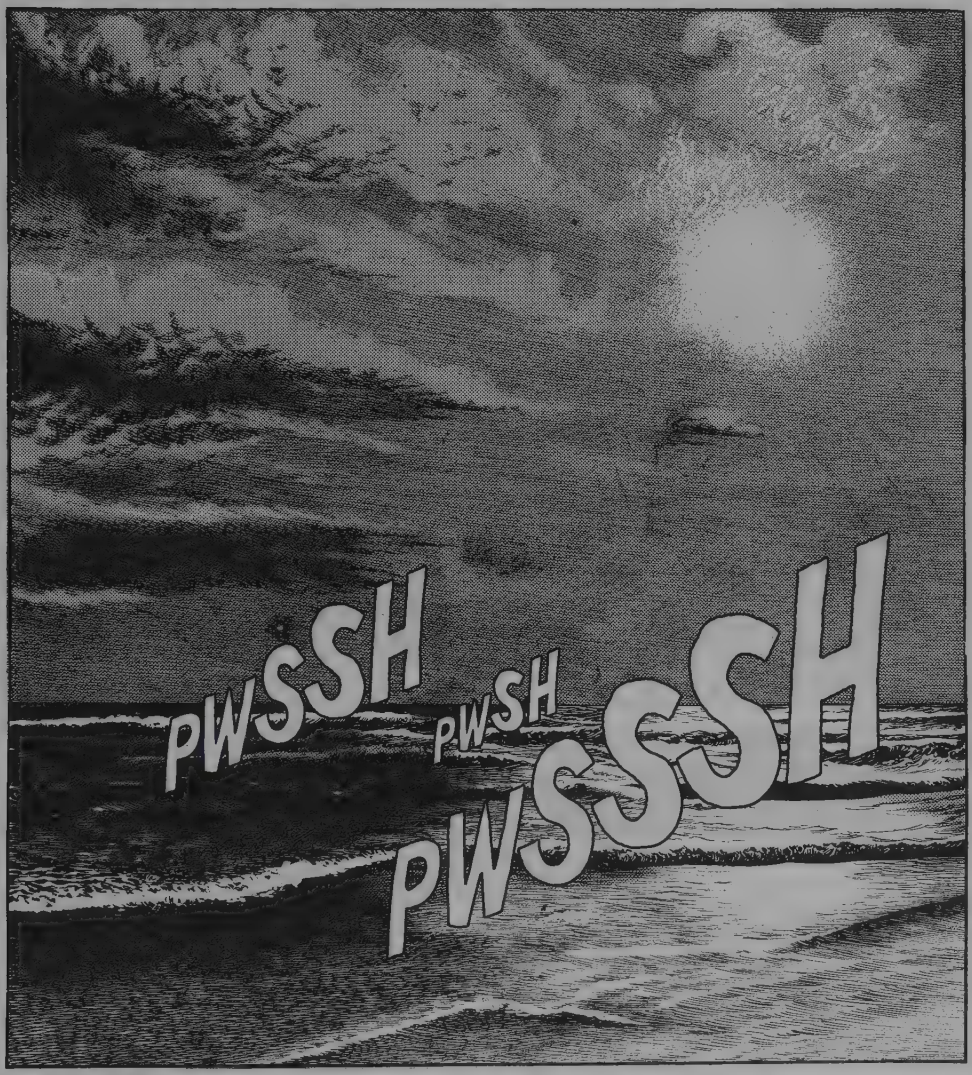

CHAK
CHAK

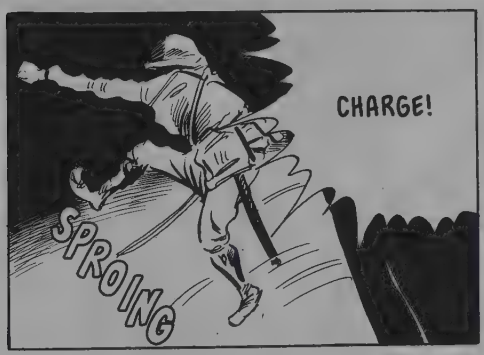

FIX BAYONETS!


SPLASH
SPLASH
SPLASH
THWAK
THWAK

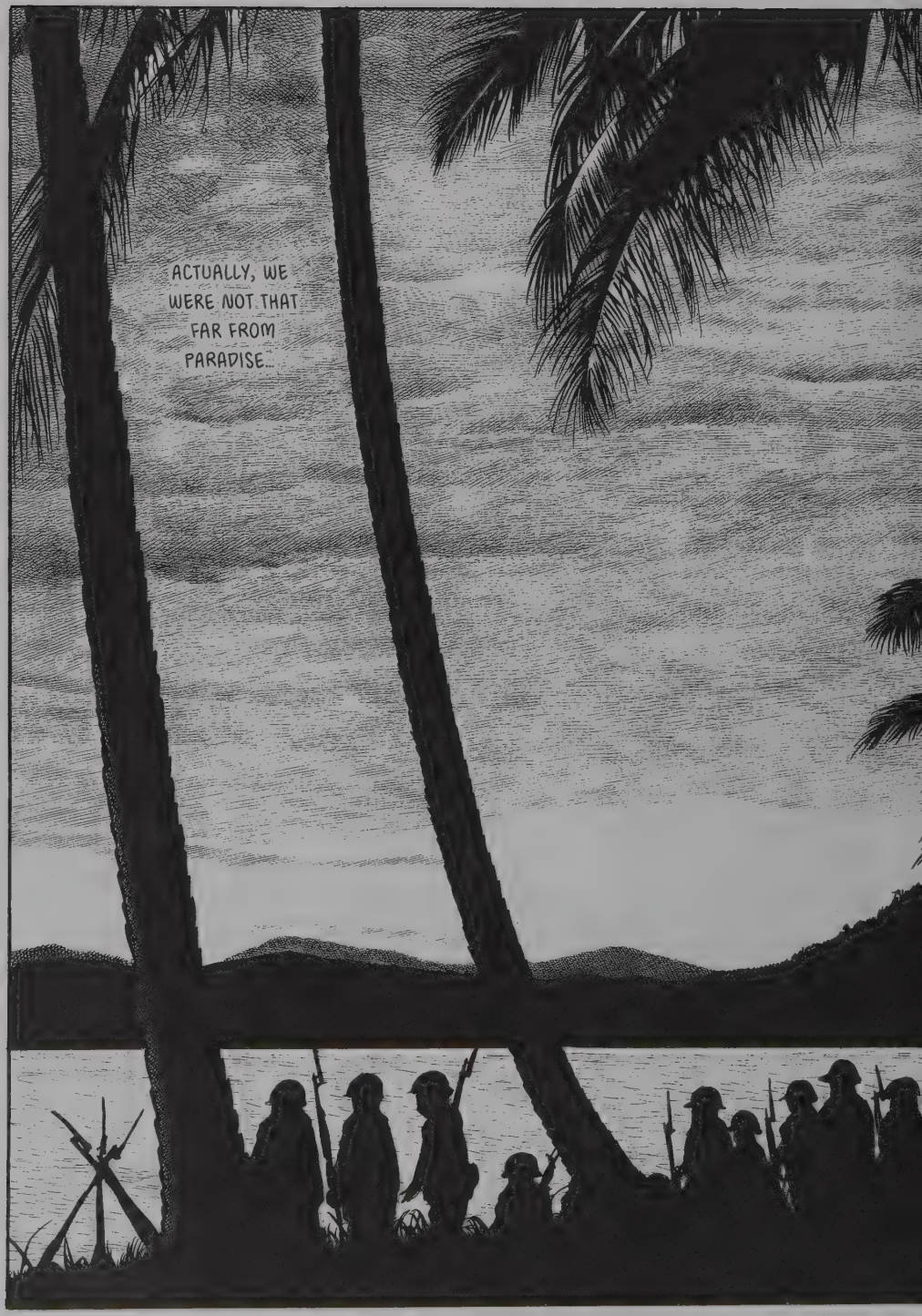
WE HAVE TAKEN THIS PLACE WITHOUT BLOODSHED!

IS THERE EVEN ANY-ONE HERE?
JESUS, IT'S QUIET.


PWSSH
PWSH
PWSSSH


CHARGE!
SPROING

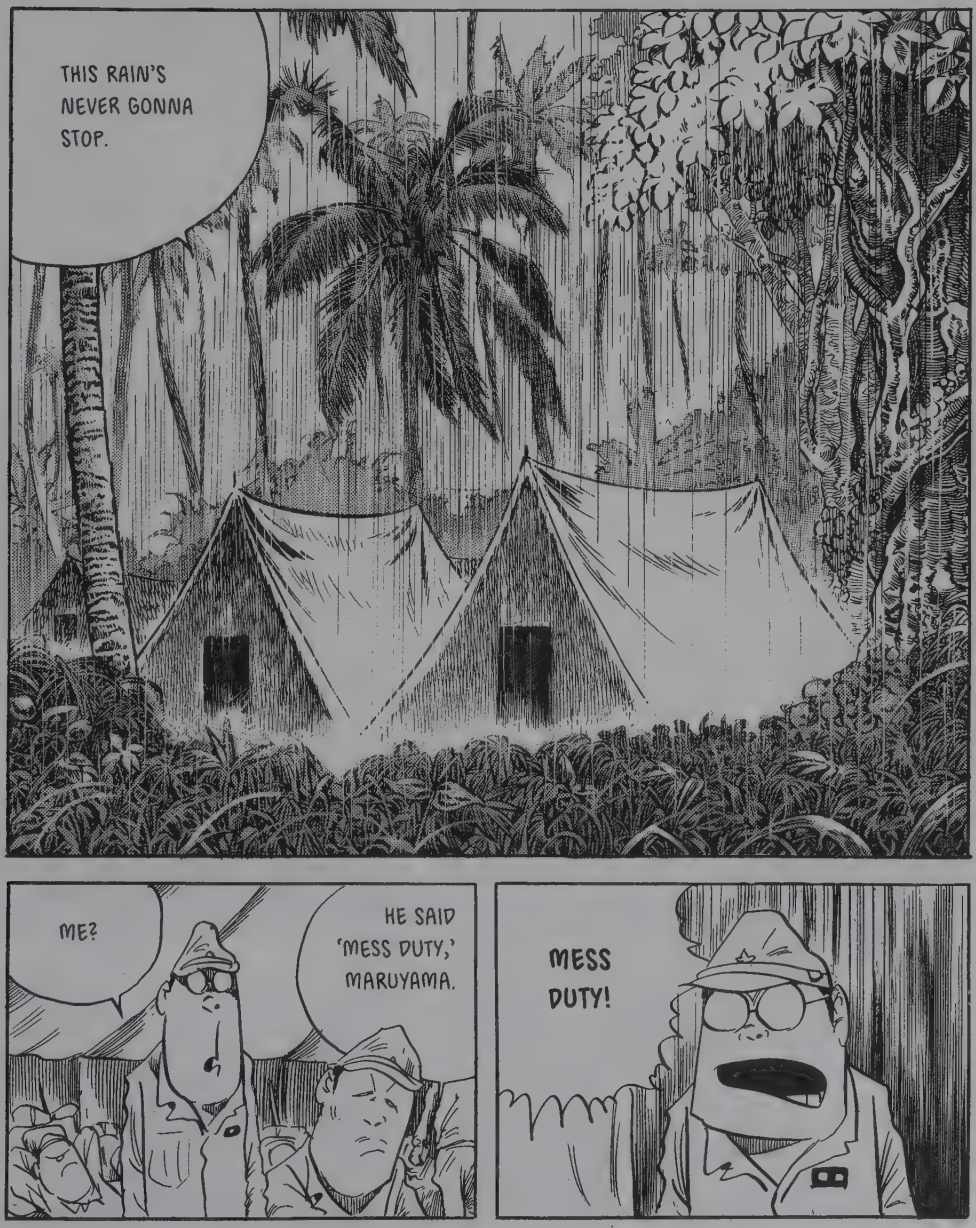
PREPARE TO LAND AND FACE THE ENEMY!

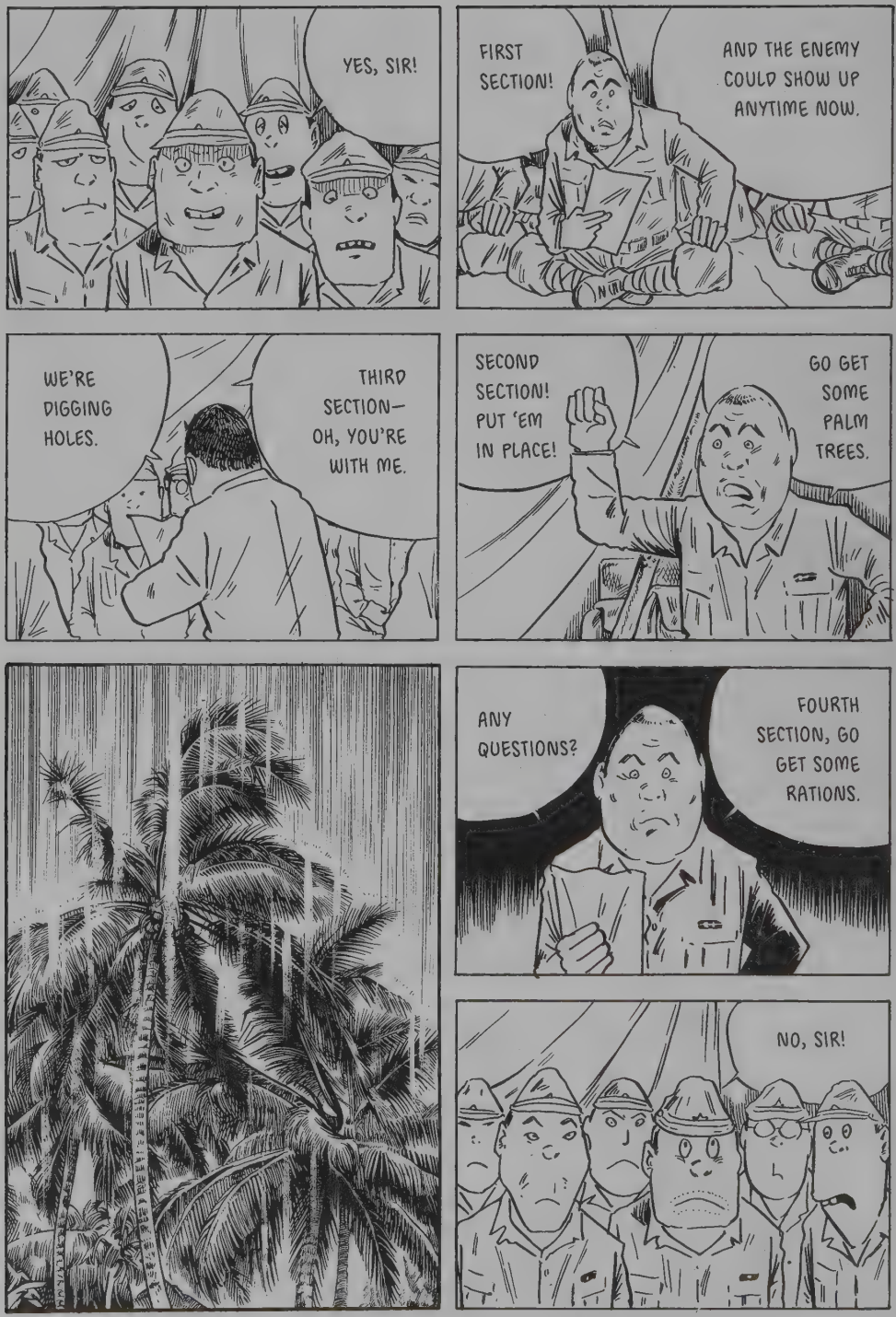

ACTUALLY, WE WERE NOT THAT FAR FROM PARADISE...

IT IS ALMOST HEAVEN, JUST LIKE YOU SAID.
WE TOOK THIS PLACE, HE SAYS.

PSSSHH
WHHAAP
QUIT LOAFING! GET YOUR ASS OUT THERE!
NOT 'OKAY'!
OKAY.
THERE'S RICE STUCK IN HERE. YOU GOTTA WASH IT BETTER THAN THIS.
THUNK
THEY SURE DO.
THEY REALLY STICK IT TO US ROOK-IES.
THUMP
GO DO IT AGAIN!

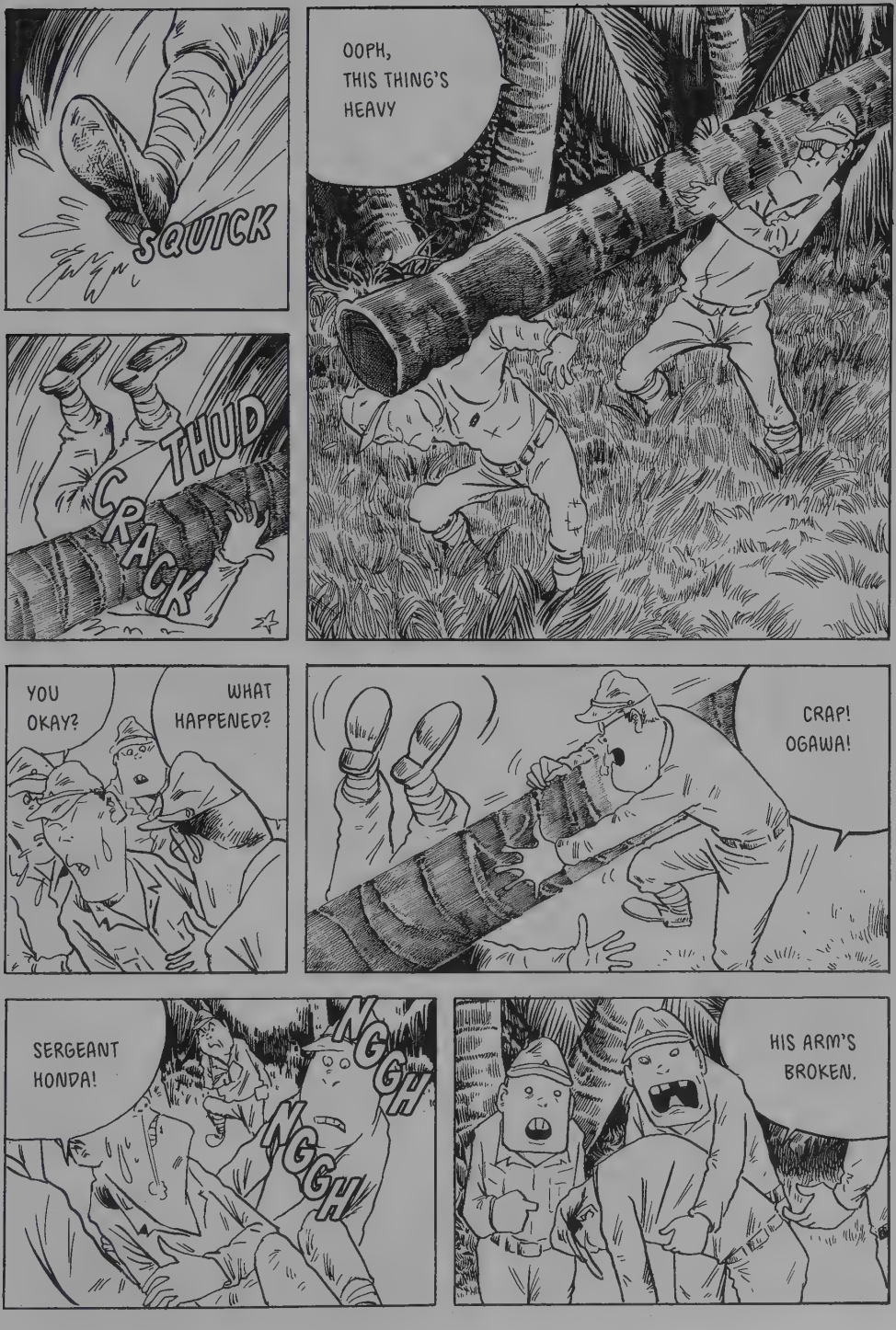
RAIN IN BAIEN




YES, SIR!
FIRST SECTION!
AND THE ENEMY COULD SHOW UP ANYTIME NOW.
WE'RE DIGGING HOLES.
THIRD SECTION— OH, YOU'RE WITH ME.
SECOND SECTION! PUT 'EM IN PLACE!
GO GET SOME PALM TREES.
ANY QUESTIONS?
FOURTH SECTION, GO GET SOME RATIONS.
NO, SIR!

MAYBE YOU SHOULD SEE THE DOC.
I FEEL REALLY FEVERISH.
PSSSSHH
GREAT.
ALL RIGHT, THE RICE IS DONE.
"WE CANNOT LET THE WEATHER STOP OUR CAMP CONSTRUCTION."
"ALTHOUGH THE RAINY SEASON IS WELL UNDERWAY..."
I'VE GOT OUR ORDERS FROM THE CAPTAIN.
EVERYBODY, LISTEN UP!

SORRY, SIR.
PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU'RE DOING!
YOU IDIOT
FWOOMP
KTUNK
...
YES, SIR.
YOU! TAKE HIM TO THE DOCTOR.
OKAY, THANKS GUYS.
WE'RE HEADING BACK.
YOU'VE GOT DENGUE FEVER.
YOUR ARM'S BROKEN, BUT MORE THAN THAT...


SQUICK
OOPH, THIS THING'S HEAVY
THUD
CRACK
YOU OKAY?
WHAT HAPPENED?
CRAP! OGAWA!
SERGEANT HONDA!
NGGH
NGGH
HIS ARM'S BROKEN.

HMM.
WONDER IF WE CAN EAT THAT FRUIT OVER THERE.
CHOMP
IF WE DIE HERE...
NOPE! TOO BITTER.
PLEH
I'D PROB'LY TAKE THE FOOD.
I'D GO FOR THE PUSSY.
WOULD YOU RATHER EAT OR FUCK?

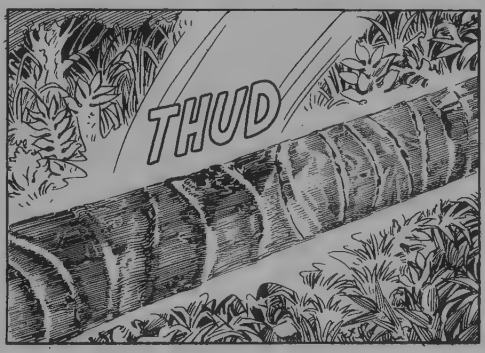
PSSSSHH

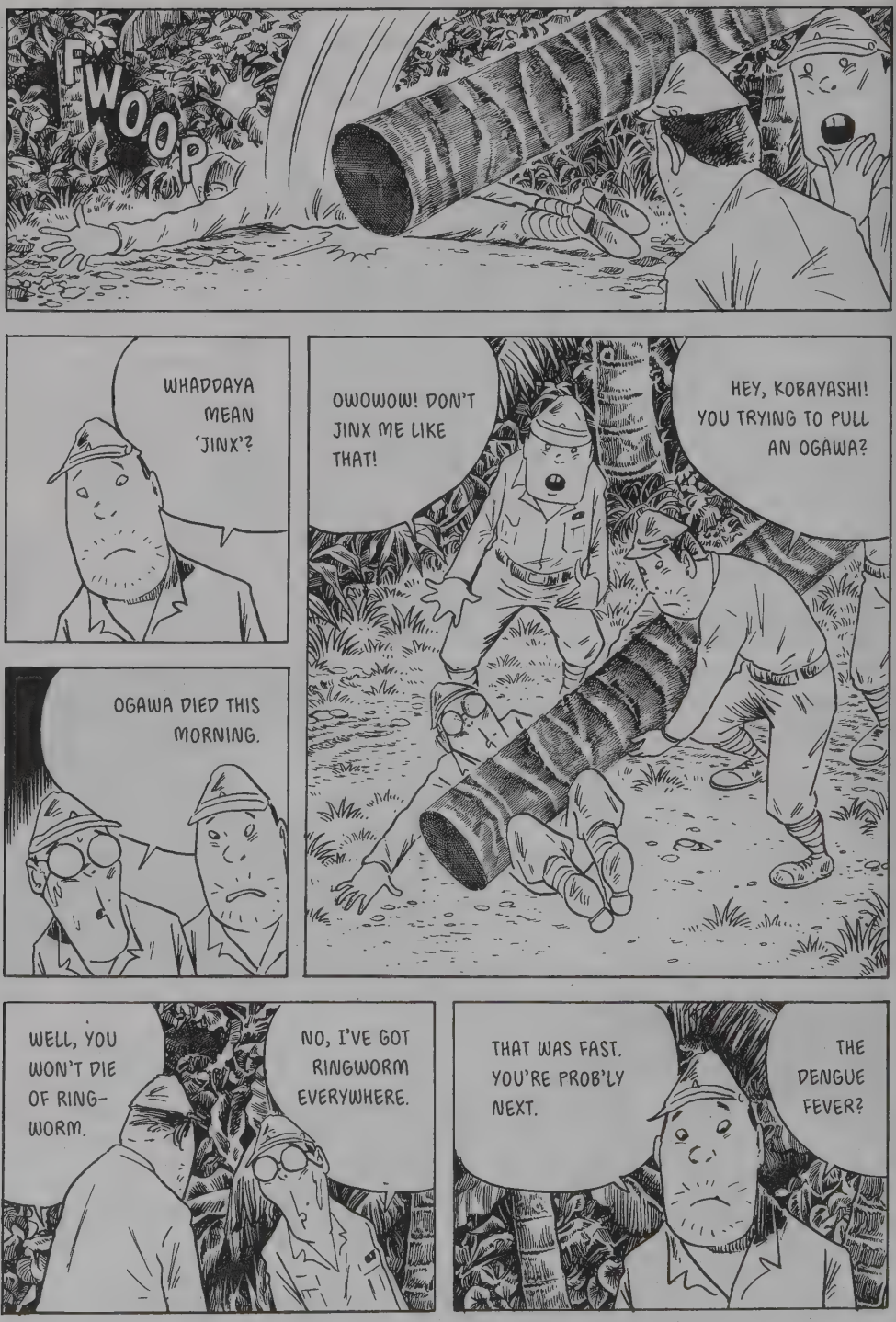
YOU SAID IT.
JUST CARRYING A TREE COULD KILL US.

WANNA TAKE A BREAK?

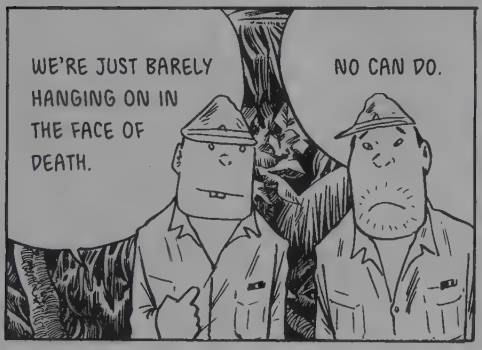
SOME SUN FINALLY!

I CAN'T DO ANYTHING ON JUST ONE CUP OF RICE A DAY.


THUD


FWOOP
WHADDAYA MEAN 'JINX'?
OWOWOW! DON'T JINX ME LIKE THAT!
HEY, KOBAYASHI! YOU TRYING TO PULL AN OGAWA?
OGAWA DIED THIS MORNING.
WELL, YOU WON'T DIE OF RING-WORM.
NO, I'VE GOT RINGWORM EVERYWHERE.
THAT WAS FAST. YOU'RE PROB'LY NEXT.
THE DENGUE FEVER?

GIVE US A HAND.
WE'VE ONLY BROUGHT IN FIVE TREES SINCE THIS MORNING.


WE'RE JUST BARELY HANGING ON IN THE FACE OF DEATH.
NO CAN DO.

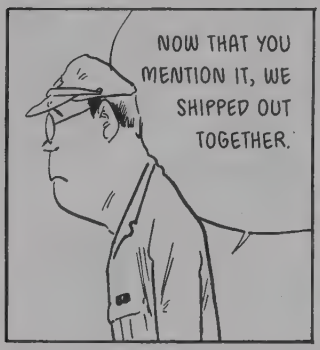
SHUT UP—YOU GUYS ARE TOUGHER THAN ME.

IT'S ALL I CAN DO TO STAY ON MY FEET.

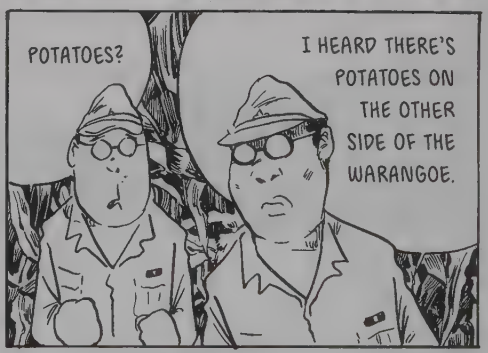
YOU GUYS ARE REALLY SOME-THING.

HEY, YOU'RE FROM MY TOWN, RIGHT?
YEAH.

WE FINALLY ESCAPED FROM BASE BUILDING, HUH?

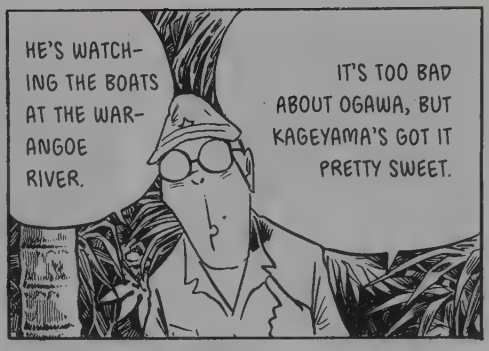

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, WE SHIPPED OUT TOGETHER.

THEY'RE PRETTY GOOD RAW, YOU KNOW.
JUST ONCE, I'D LIKE TO EAT UNTIL I'M FULL.

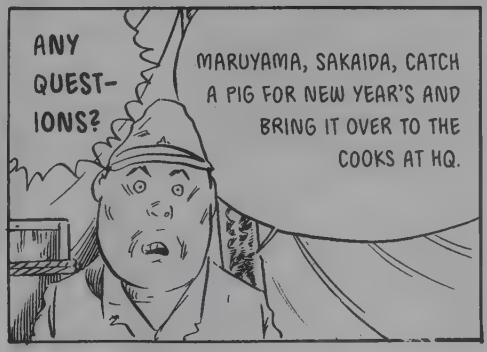

POTATOES?
I HEARD THERE'S POTATOES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WARANGOE.

LET'S GET GOING AND GET THAT PIG!
YES, SIR!

EVERYONE HERE?
CAN'T WAIT FOR THAT FEAST.

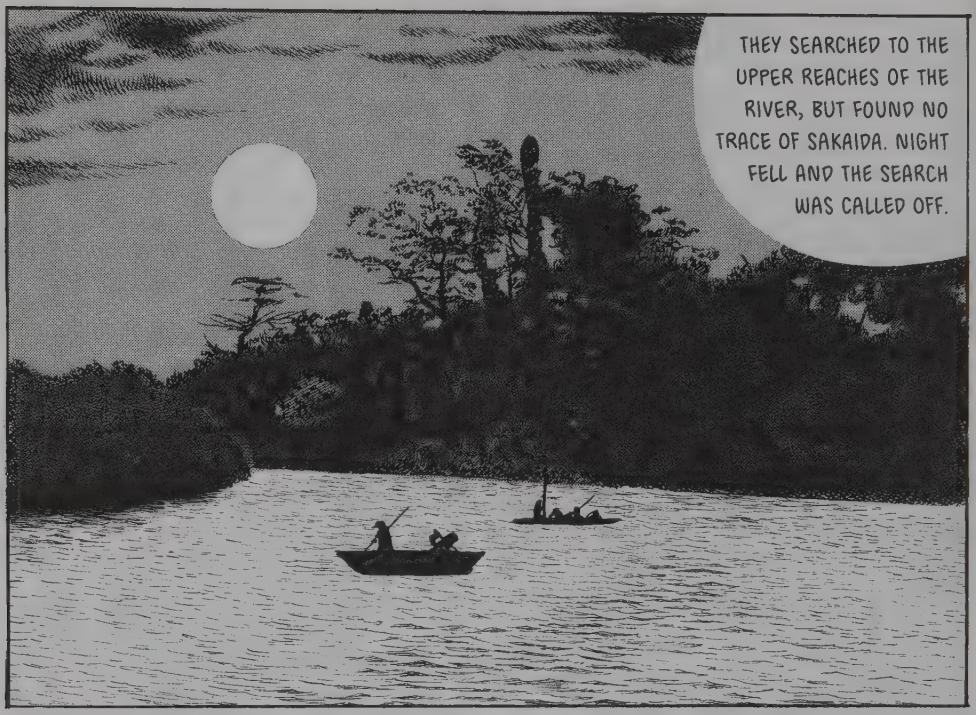


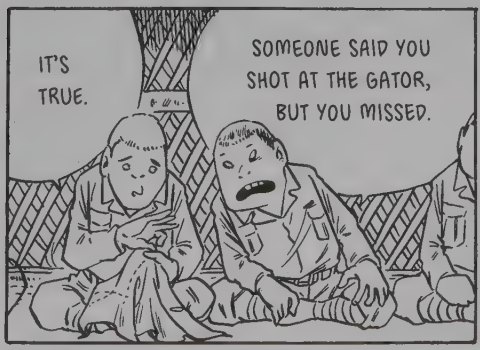
*SEE NOTES PAGE 366.



THE BOAT IS STARTING TO FALL APART, SO ONLY TWO OF YOU CAN GO AT ONCE.
THEN I GUESS IT'S TWO AT A TIME.
LET'S GET OVER THERE AND EAT SOME OF THOSE POTATOES!
OKAY.
YOU WANNA GO NEXT?
I'VE ALWAYS LOVED POT-ATOES, EVER SINCE I WAS A KID.
ME...
HAH HAH HAH

YOU MEAN A PIG?
WE'LL DEFINITELY GET ONE.
EITHER WAY, THE COLONEL SAID CATCH ONE.
ARE THERE REALLY PIGS HERE?
HEY, KAGEYAMA, WE'RE COMING!
I HEARD SOMETHING ABOUT ALLIGATORS IN THE RIVER.
ARE WE CROSSING THE WARANGOE RIVER?
HOW MANY ARE YOU?

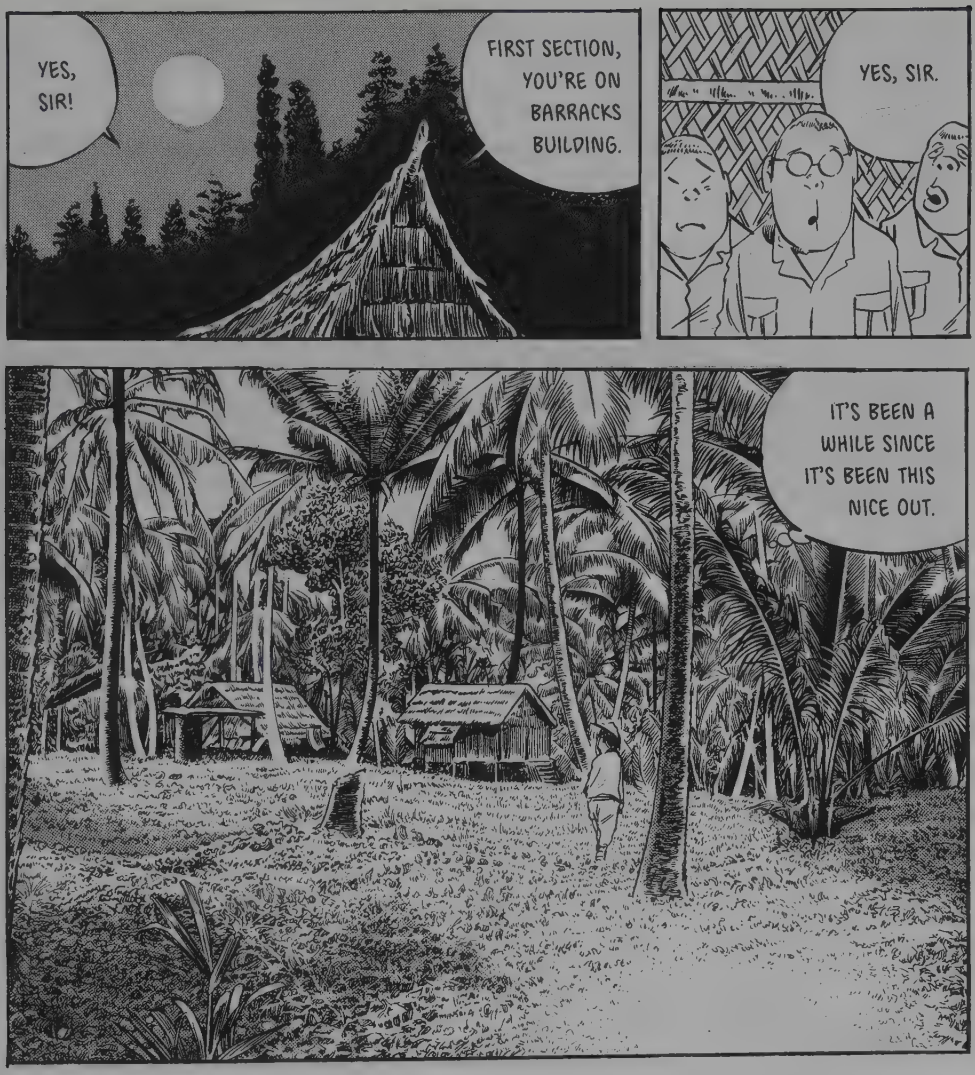


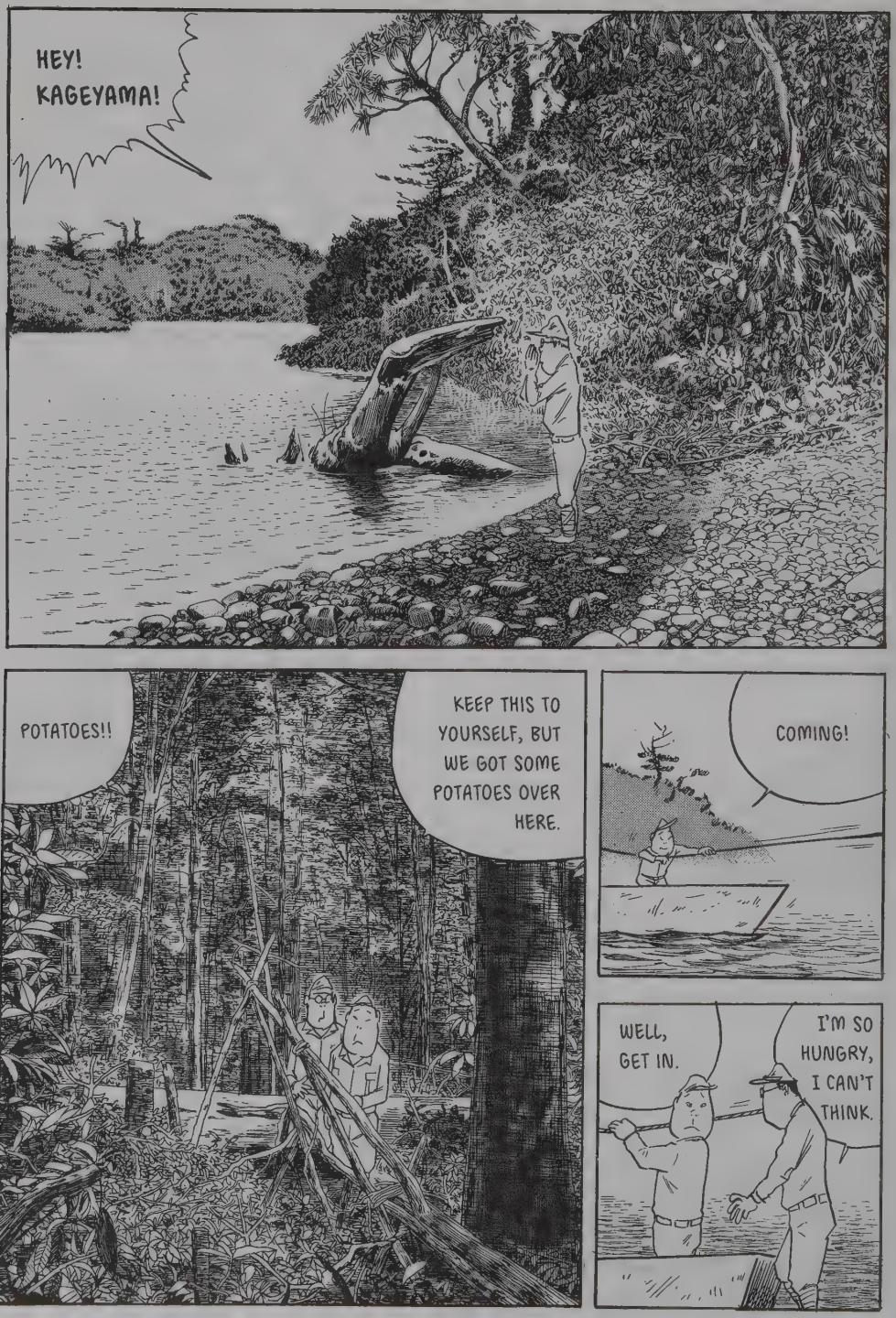


*SEE NOTES PAGE 366.

?
THEY'RE PRETTY GOOD RAW, RIGHT?
?
WHAT HAPPENED TO SAKAIDA?
WAS HE EATEN BY AN ALL-IGATOR?
I THINK HIS HAT FELL OFF. HE WAS REACHING OUT TO GRAB IT AND THEN...
HMM, I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED... I WAS FOCUSED ON DIGGING FOR GOLD.
WHICH MEANS NO TIME FOR PIG HUNT-ING.
WE NEED EVERYONE HERE. WE'LL HAVE TO LOOK FOR HIM.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
AN ALLIGATOR WOULD'VE MADE MORE NOISE.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
IF YOU'D LIKE, I CAN DRAW YOU WHEN WE GET HOME...
WHEN WE GET BACK TO JAPAN...
THIS IS A PICTURE OF MY FAMILY.
?
TALK SENSE, BOY. NONE OF US ARE LEAVING HERE ALIVE.
THAT'S RIGHT.
YOUR FAMILY RUNS A LUMBER SHOP, SIR?


YES, SIR!
FIRST SECTION, YOU'RE ON BARRACKS BUILDING.
YES, SIR.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE IT'S BEEN THIS NICE OUT.
OKAY, SIR.
SAY, WILL YOU DO MY PORTRAIT?
GOOD.
MARUYAMA REPORTING, SIR. HERE TO DRAW SOME CARDS.


HEY!
KAGEYAMA!
POTATOES!!
KEEP THIS TO YOURSELF, BUT WE GOT SOME POTATOES OVER HERE.
COMING!
WELL, GET IN.
I'M SO HUNGRY, I CAN'T THINK.

YES. THERE'LL BE SOME KIND OF MARK IF YOU JUST REPAIR THEM, MAKING IT OBVIOUS WHICH CARD IS WHICH.
YOU WANT ME TO REDRAW ALL OF THEM, SIR?
HERE, THESE CARDS ARE SO WORN OUT I CAN'T USE THEM ANY-MORE.
IT'S LUNCH.
WHAT'RE YOU DOIN' HERE?
UNDERSTOOD, SIR. I'LL GET TO WORK.
YES, SIR.
YOU HAVE TO SAY SOMETHING THE DAY BEFORE IF YOU ARE GOING TO EAT AT HQ.
OOPH
WHHHAAP
BIT LATE FOR THAT!
SO MY LUNCH IS JUST A SLAP...

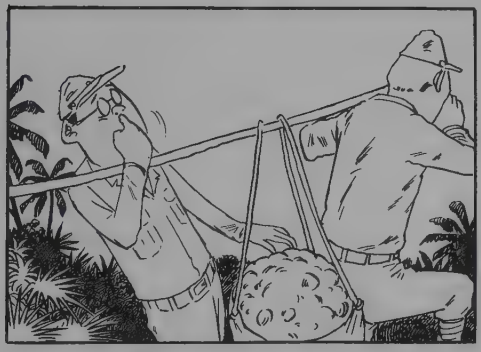
ALLIGATORS DO BURY THEIR FOOD IN THE MUD AND EAT IT ONCE IT ROTS A BIT, SO...
IT HAS TO BE SAKAIDA. SO HE WAS EATEN BY A GATOR.
IT'S THE LOWER HALF OF A SOLDIER!
AND HE REALLY STINKS, HUH?
AND NOW HE'S IN THIS SAD STATE.
WE JOINED UP AT THE SAME TIME, YOU KNOW.
LET'S WASH HIM BEFORE WE BRING HIM BACK.
PSSSSH
PSSH
PSSH

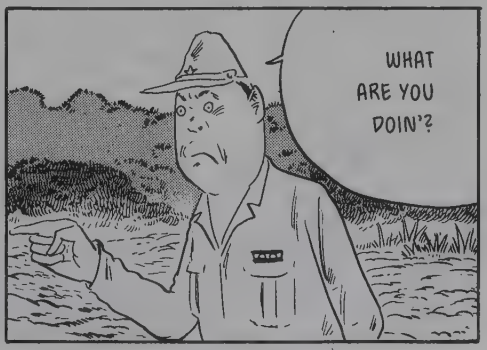
HELP YOURSELF.
MNCH MNCH
WOW! WITH THIS MANY POTATOES, I CAN NOW DIE A HAPPY MAN!
SOMETHING COMES FLOATING ALONG.
JUST WHEN I WAS THINKING IT STANK LIKE THE DEAD...
AH!

HE'S WAY TOO WOUND UP.
WHAT'S SERGEANT HONDA'S PROB-LEM?
USELESS PIECE OF CRAP.
YESSIR!
THE ANGLE HERE'S ALL WRONG!
WE'LL BE SHOOTING AT THE ENEMY FROM THESE TRENCHES.
AND WHAT ARE YOU MEN DOING?
WHHHAAP
THE ENEMY'S GONNA BE HERE SOON. WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU THINKING?
'YES, SIR' DOESN'T CUT IT!
YES, SIR!
YOU SAID IT!
HE'S PROB'LY AN ORPHAN FROM HOKKAIDO*.
A REAL BEAR.
WHAT AN ASS.

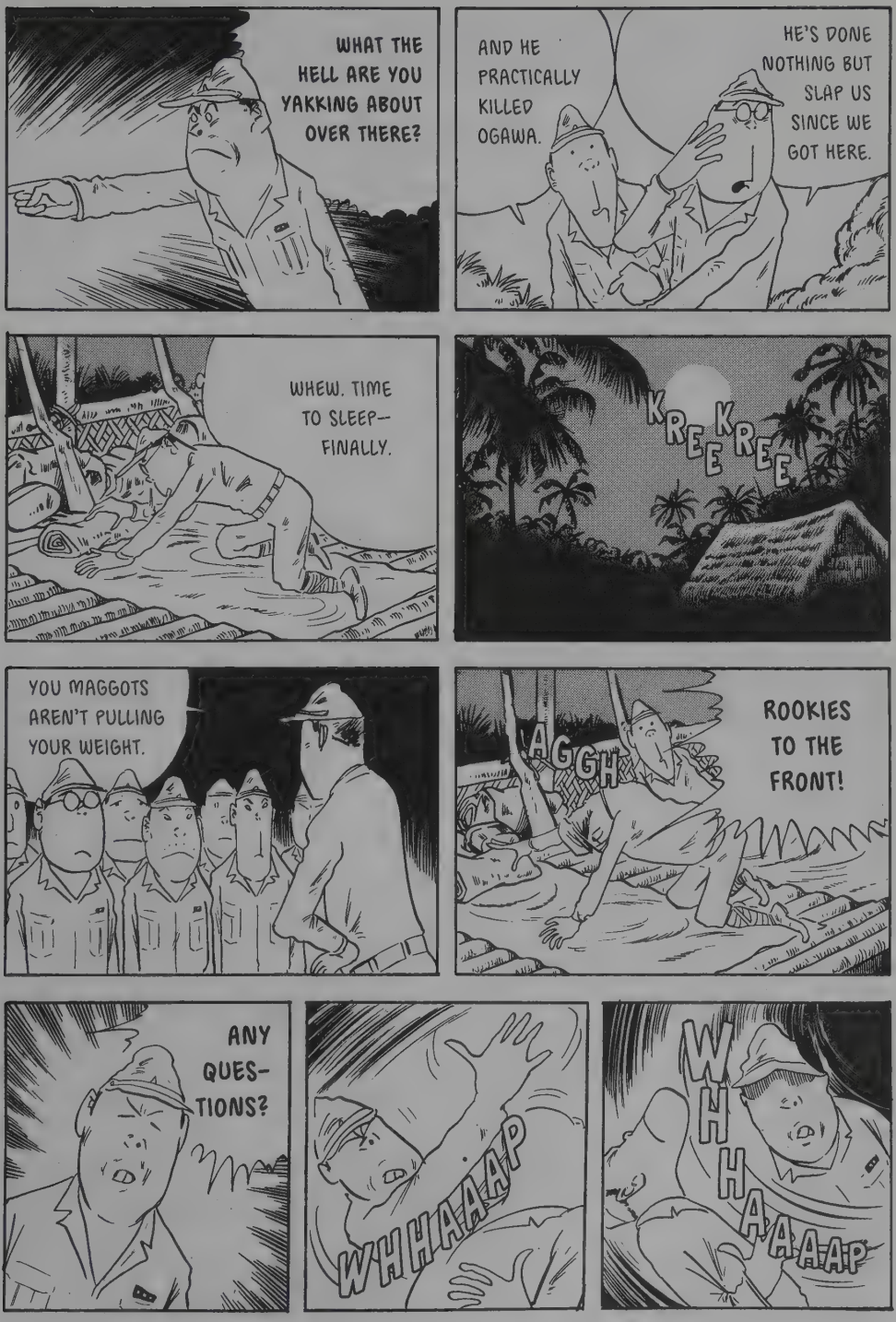
*SEE NOTES PAGE 366.

HARD LABOUR AND A FEW SLAPS

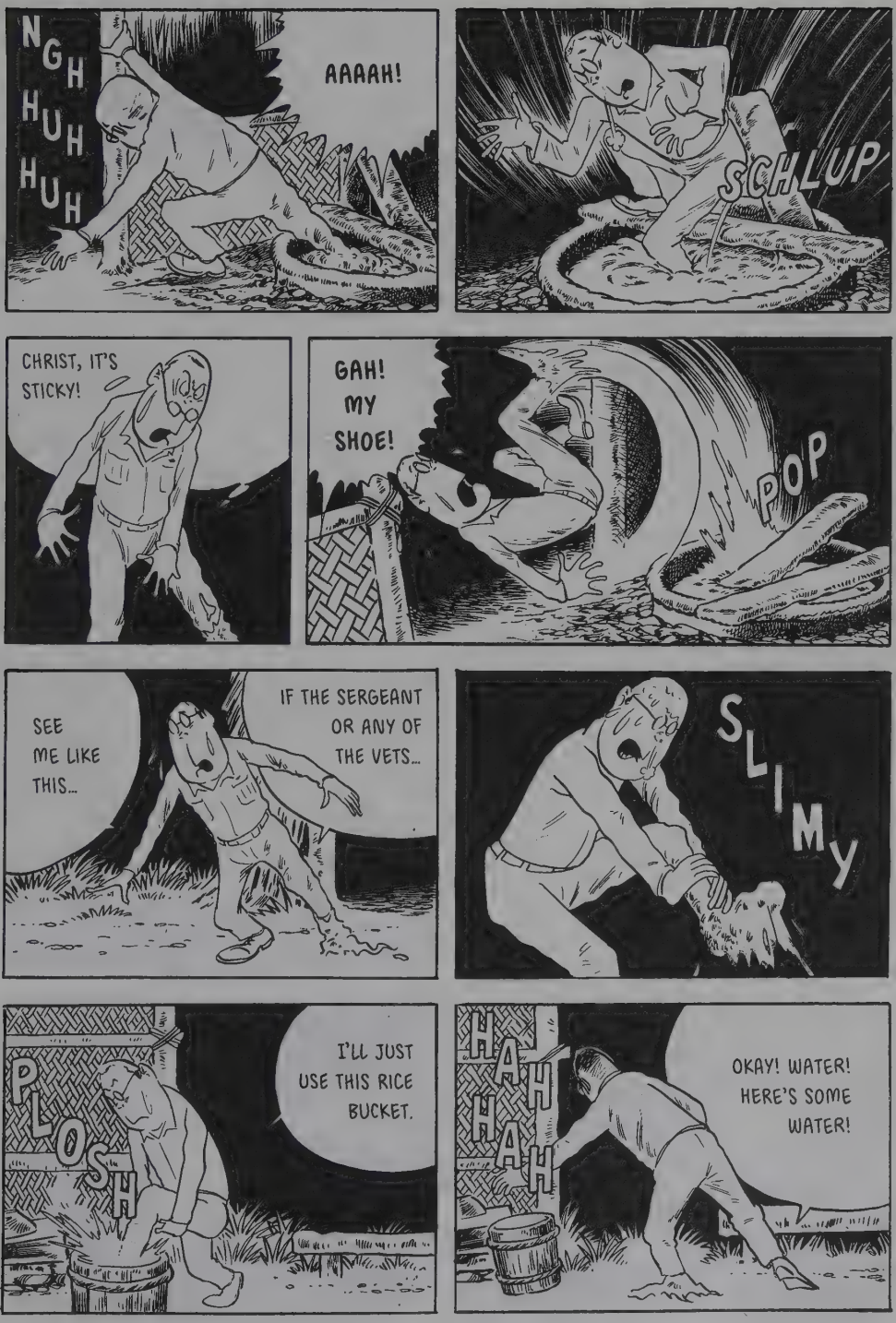


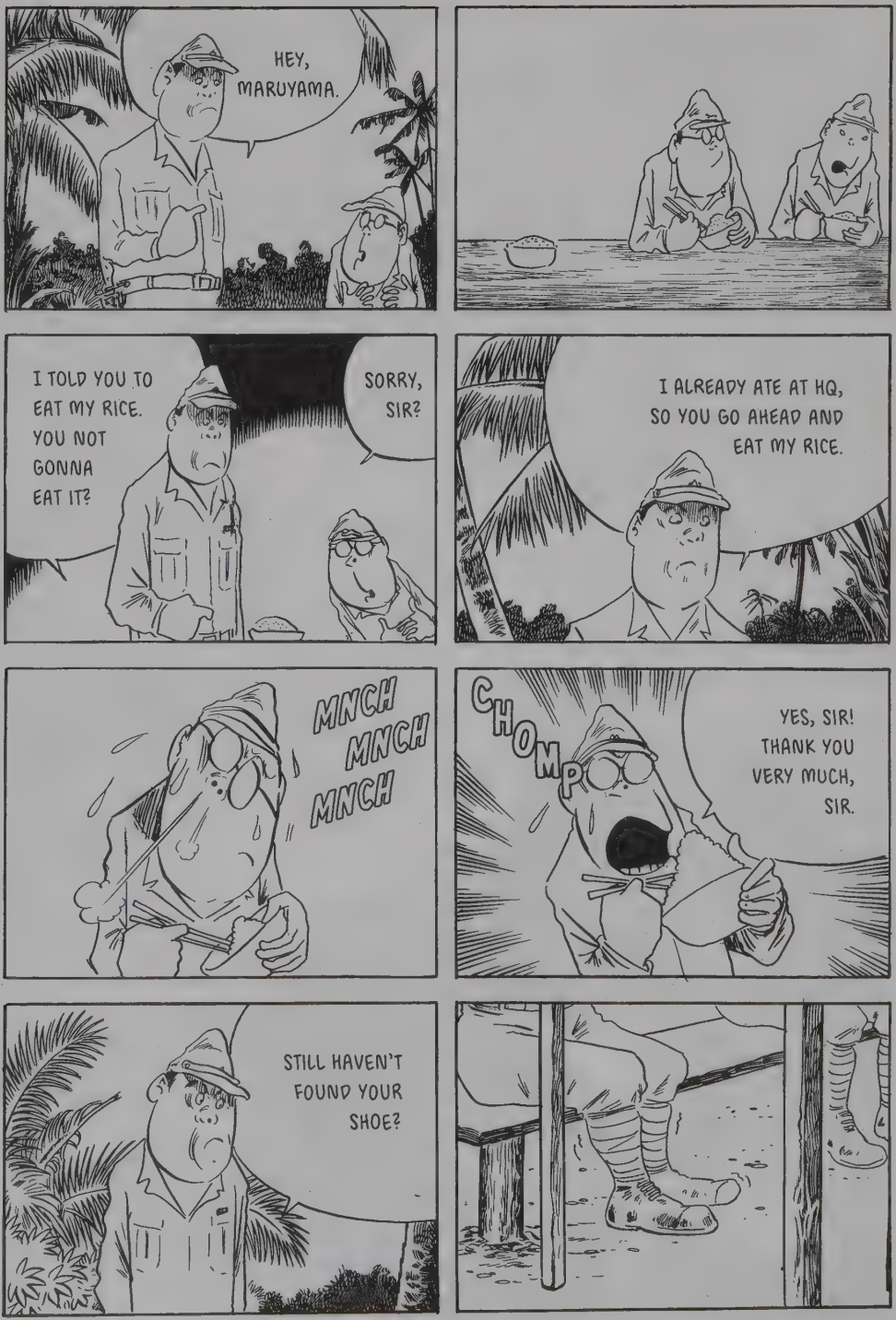


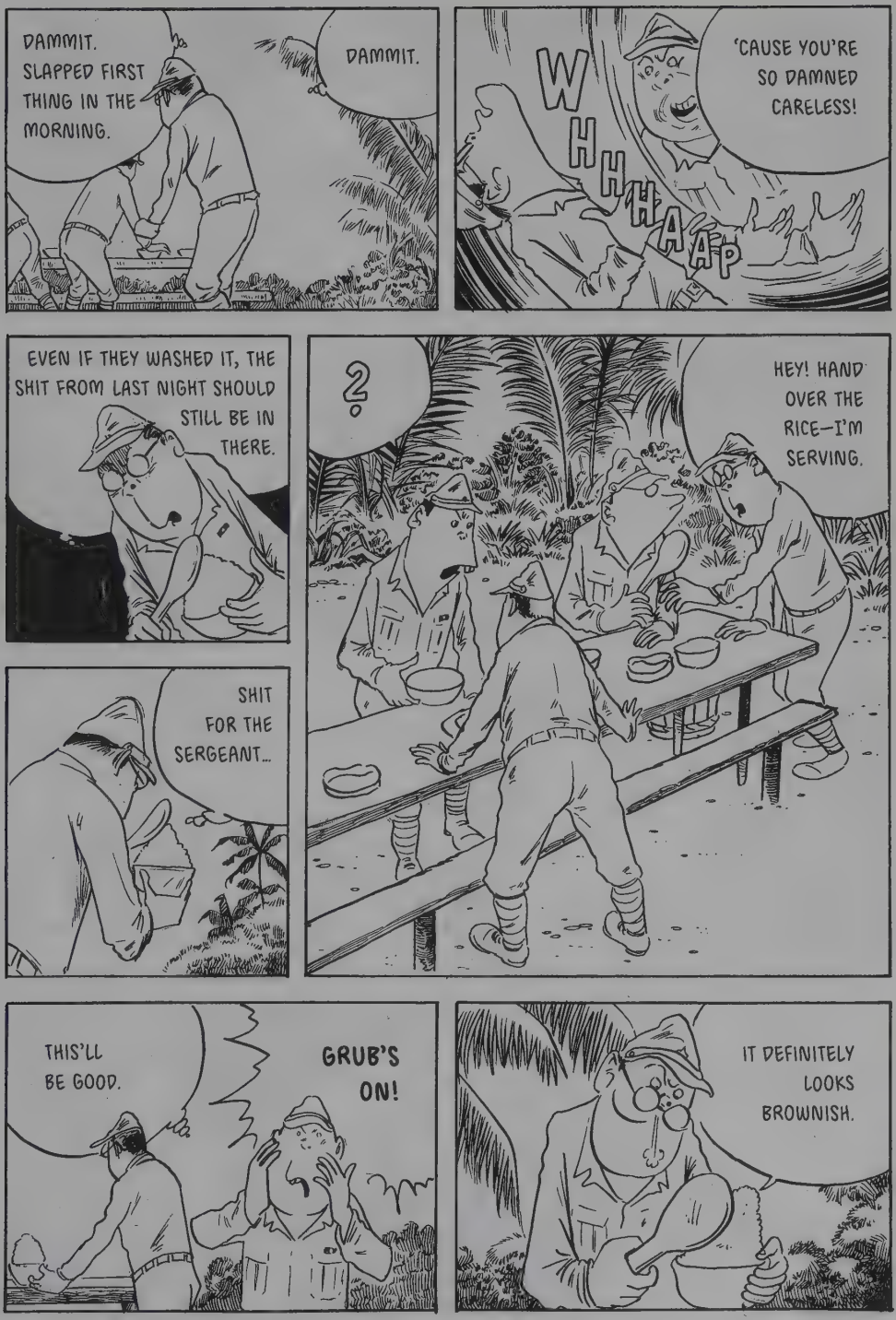
WHHAAAAP
I CAN'T HEAR YOU!
NO, SIR.
WE DON'T EVEN GET BREAKS TO PISS.
I'M BEAT.
FWOOMP
THUMP
AAH! GOTTA SHIT!
AAH! IT'S COMING OUT!!


WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU YAKKING ABOUT OVER THERE?
AND HE PRACTICALLY KILLED OGAWA.
HE'S DONE NOTHING BUT SLAP US SINCE WE GOT HERE.
WHEW. TIME TO SLEEP— FINALLY.
KREE KREE
YOU MAGGOTS AREN'T PULLING YOUR WEIGHT.
AGGH
ROOKIES TO THE FRONT!
ANY QUES-TIONS?
WHHAAAP
WHHAAAAP

THAT WAS NO FUN.
WHEW.
SPLISH
SPLISH
SPLISH
NUMBERS!
ROLL CALL!
ONE TWO THREE
I SLIPPED AND FELL INTO THE RIVER... AND...
UH, YES, UM, IT—
YOUR SHOE...


NGH
HUH
HUH
AAAAH!
AAA
SCHLUP
CHRIST, IT'S STICKY!
GAH! MY SHOE!
POP
SEE ME LIKE THIS...
IF THE SERGEANT OR ANY OF THE VETS...
SLIMY
PLOSH
I'LL JUST USE THIS RICE BUCKET.
HAH HAH
OKAY! WATER! HERE'S SOME WATER!


HEY, MARUYAMA.
I TOLD YOU TO EAT MY RICE. YOU NOT GONNA EAT IT?
SORRY, SIR?
I ALREADY ATE AT HQ, SO YOU GO AHEAD AND EAT MY RICE.
MNCH MNCH MNCH
CHOMP
YES, SIR! THANK YOU VERY MUCH, SIR.
STILL HAVEN'T FOUND YOUR SHOE?


DAMMIT. SLAPPED FIRST THING IN THE MORNING.
DAMMIT.
WHHHHAAAP
'CAUSE YOU'RE SO DAMNED CARELESS!
EVEN IF THEY WASHED IT, THE SHIT FROM LAST NIGHT SHOULD STILL BE IN THERE.
2.
HEY! HAND OVER THE RICE—I'M SERVING.
SHIT FOR THE SERGEANT...
THIS'LL BE GOOD.
GRUB'S ON!
IT DEFINITELY LOOKS BROWNISH.

AAAWK
AWK

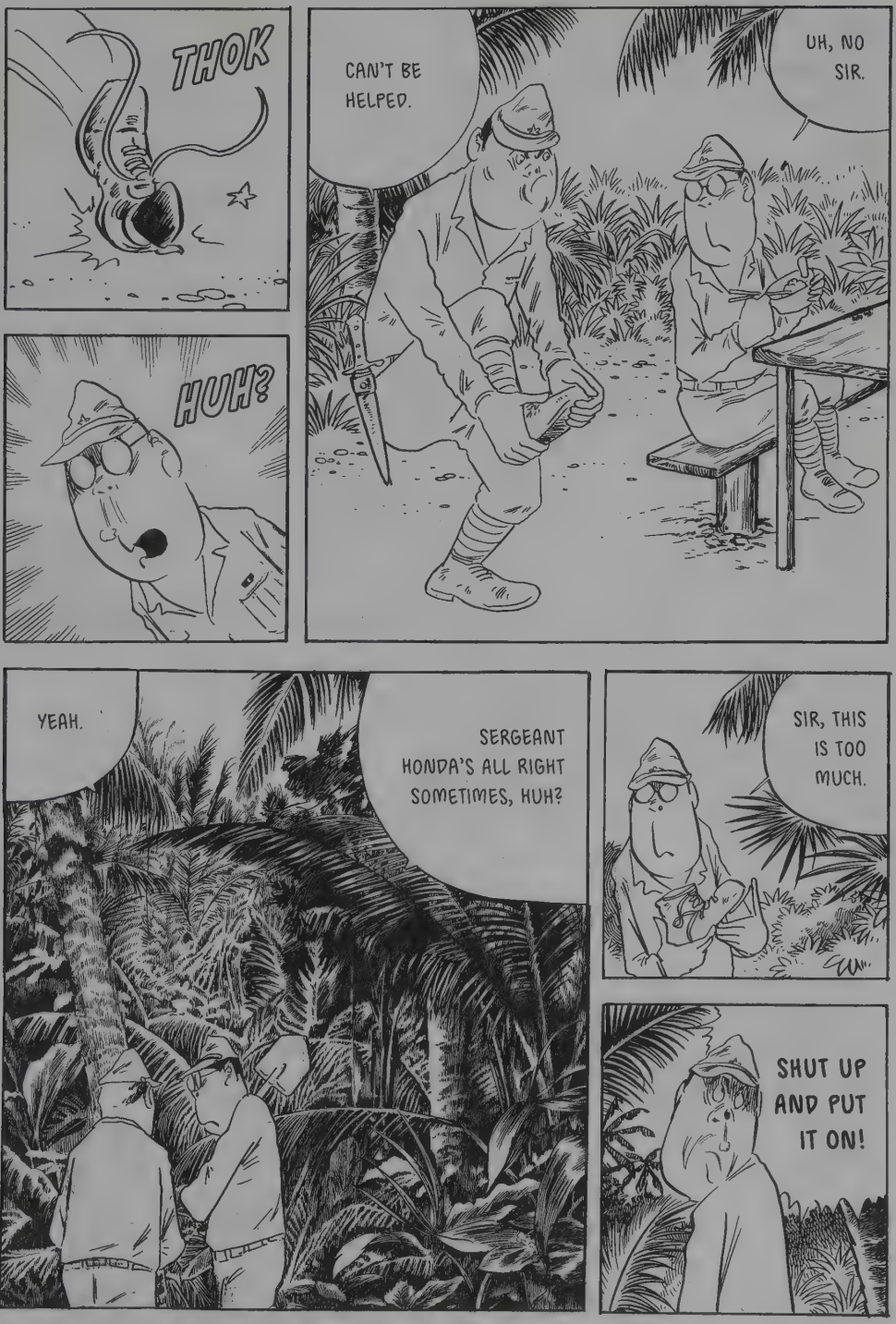
HE HAS A BOY IN GRADE FIVE AND A GIRL WHO'S ALMOST THREE.
I HEARD...

YES, SIR.
SERGEANT HONDA, YOUR SHOES...

THE ORDER'S COME DOWN FROM DIVISION HQ FOR THE MATSUYAMA CAMP MEN TO HEAD OUT THIS MONTH.

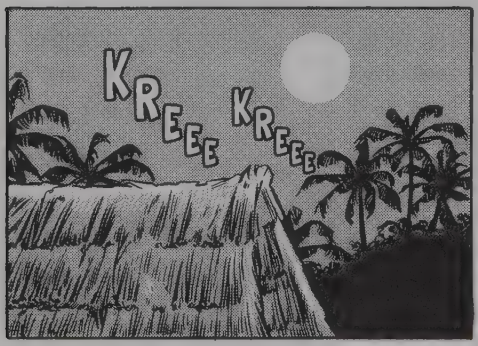
HA HA HA HA!
I DECIDED TO GO BAREFOOT FROM NOW ON.

UNDERSTOOD, SIR. MY MEN AND I WON'T LET YOU DOWN.


THOK
HUH?
CAN'T BE HELPED.
UH, NO SIR.
YEAH.
SERGEANT HONDA'S ALL RIGHT SOMETIMES, HUH?
SIR, THIS IS TOO MUCH.
SHUT UP AND PUT IT ON!

NAH, THIS IS HELL.

THIS PLACE'S LIKE PRISON, AKASAKI.


KREEE KREEE

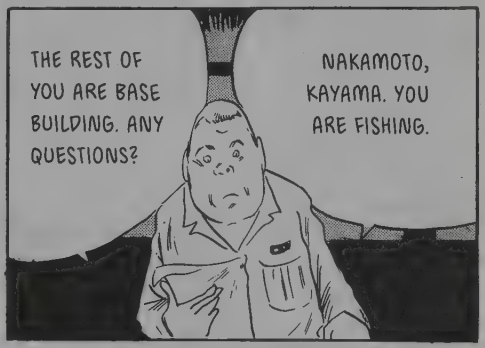
WHO WAS THAT? WHO'S TALKING NOW?

NOT BAD, HEY KAYAMA? WE GET TO GO FISHING. LET'S TAKE IT SLOW.

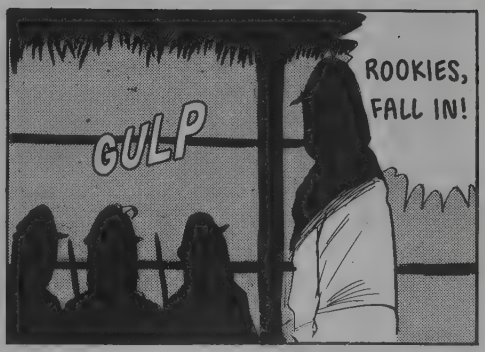
SINCE THE PIG HUNT FOR NEW YEAR'S FAILED, WE ARE TO GO FISHING WITH OUR GRENADES.

LISTEN UP!

NO SIR

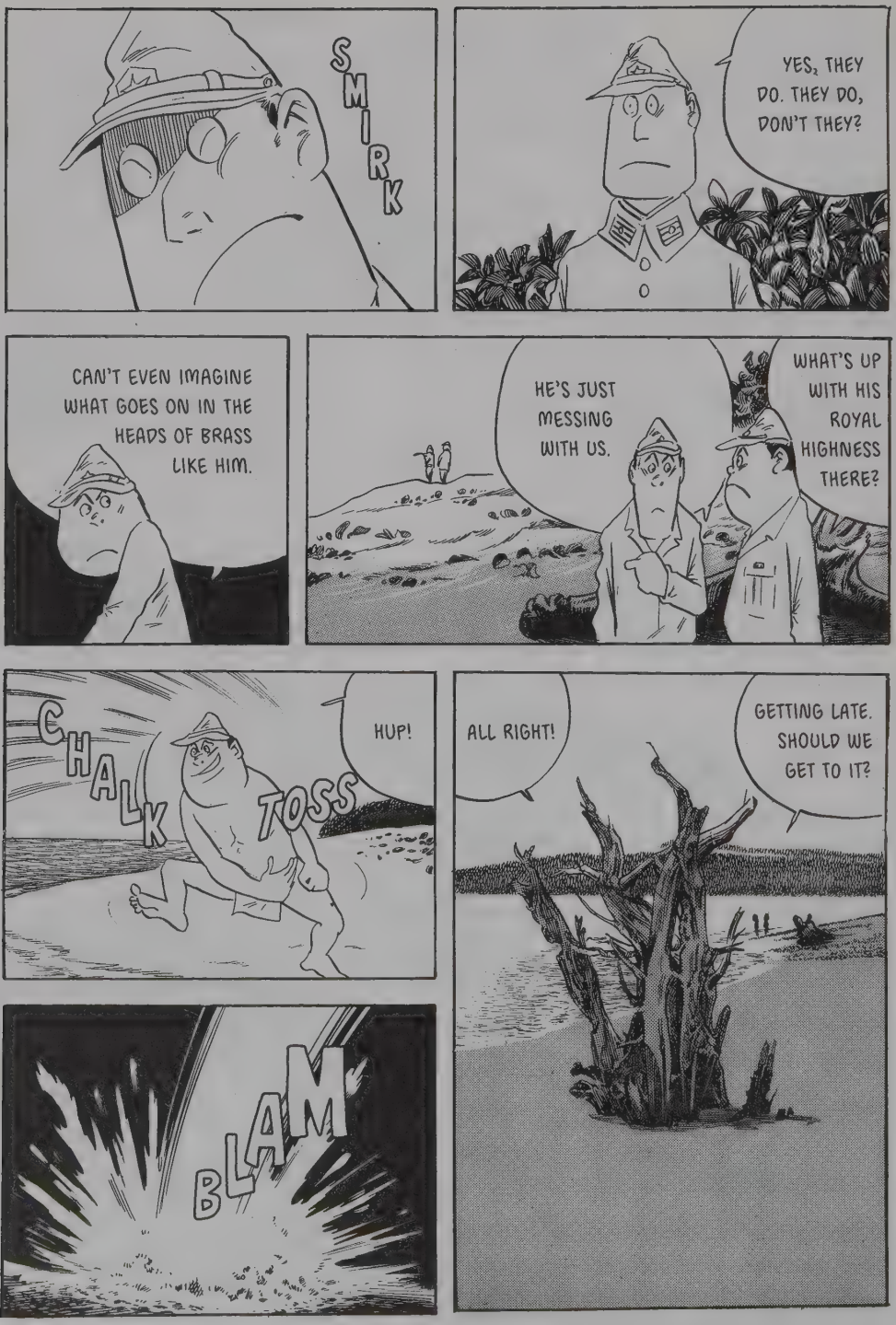

THE REST OF YOU ARE BASE BUILDING. ANY QUESTIONS?
NAKAMOTO, KAYAMA. YOU ARE FISHING.

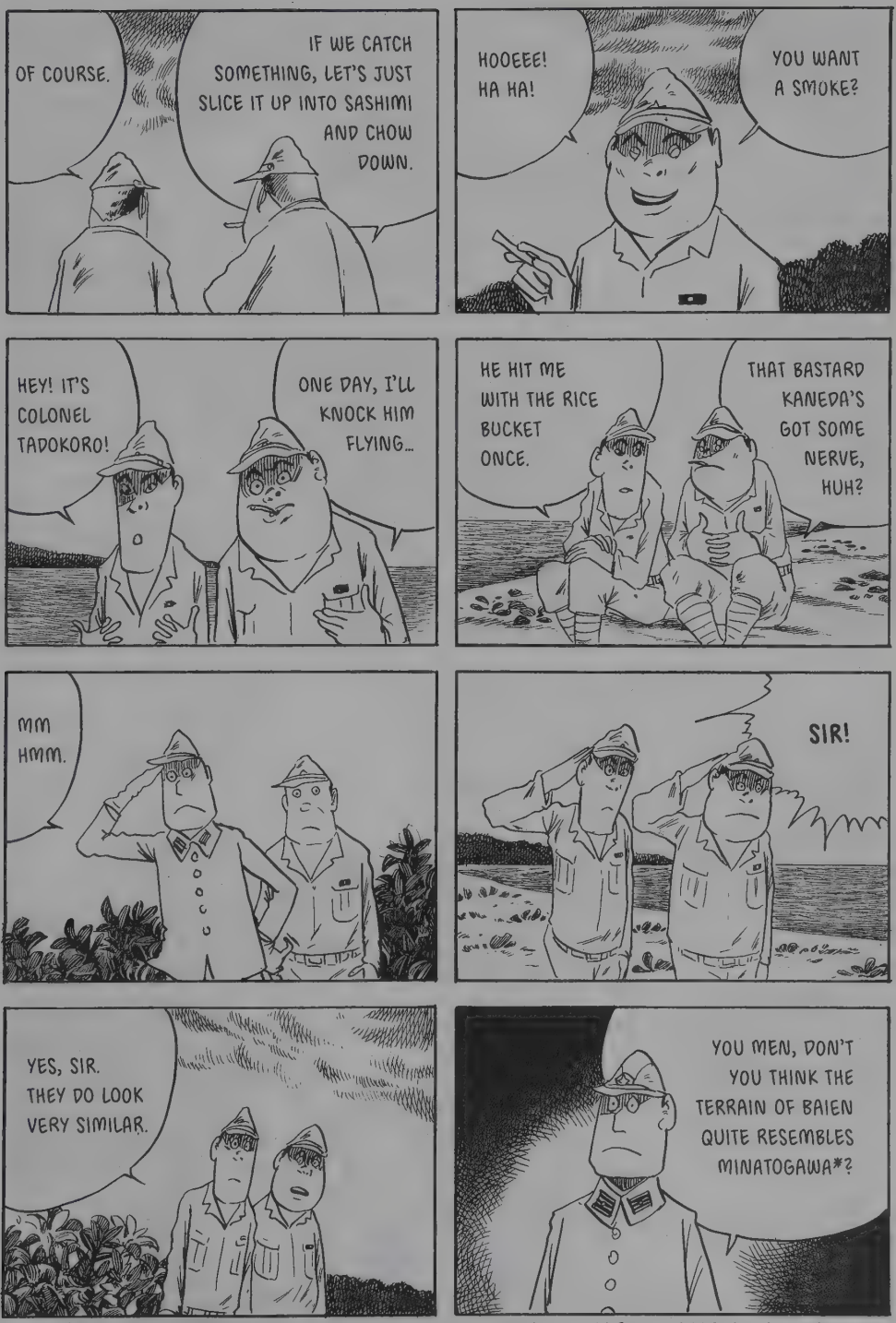
WHHHHHAAAAP


GULP
ROOKIES, FALL IN!

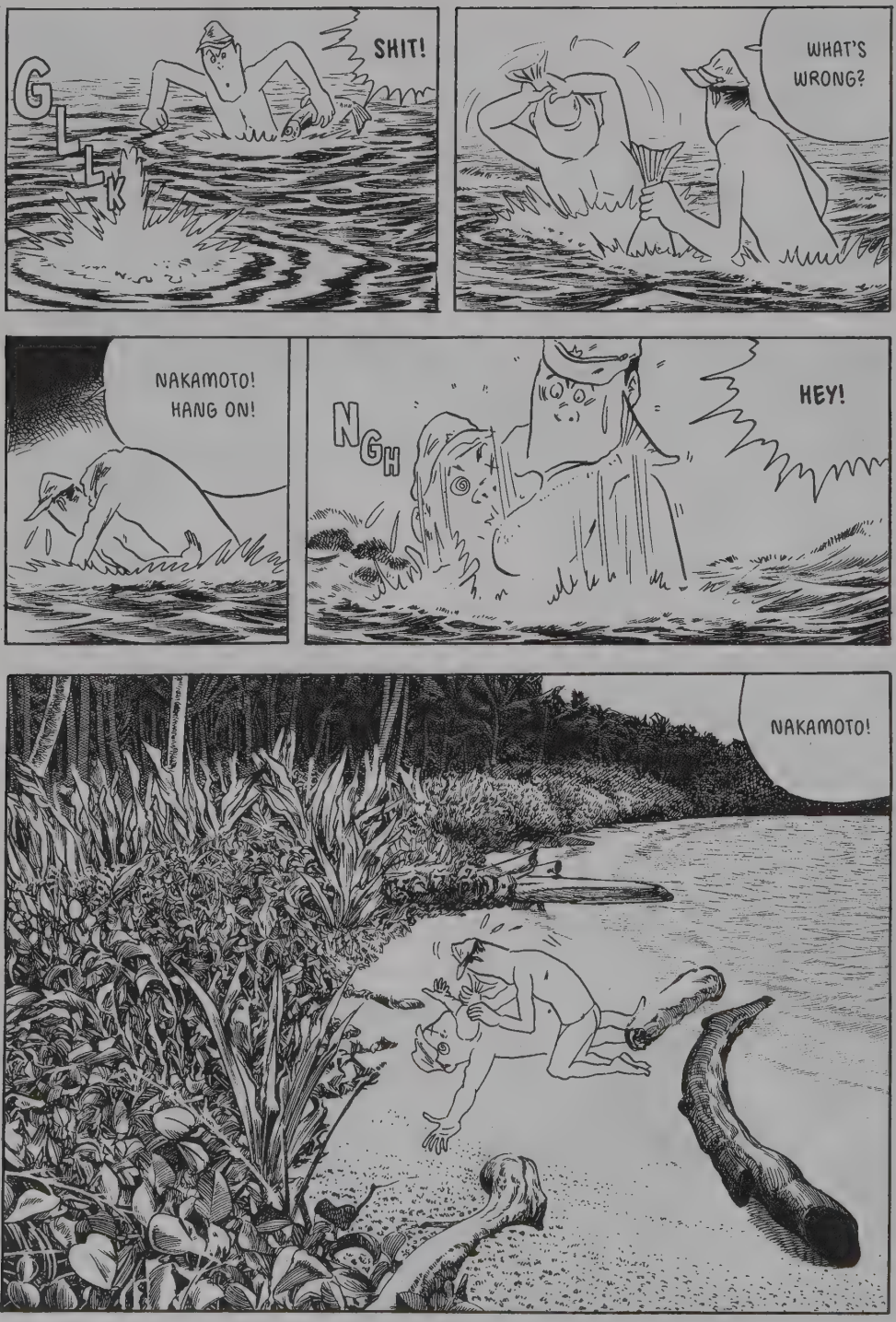
THANK YOU, SIR!

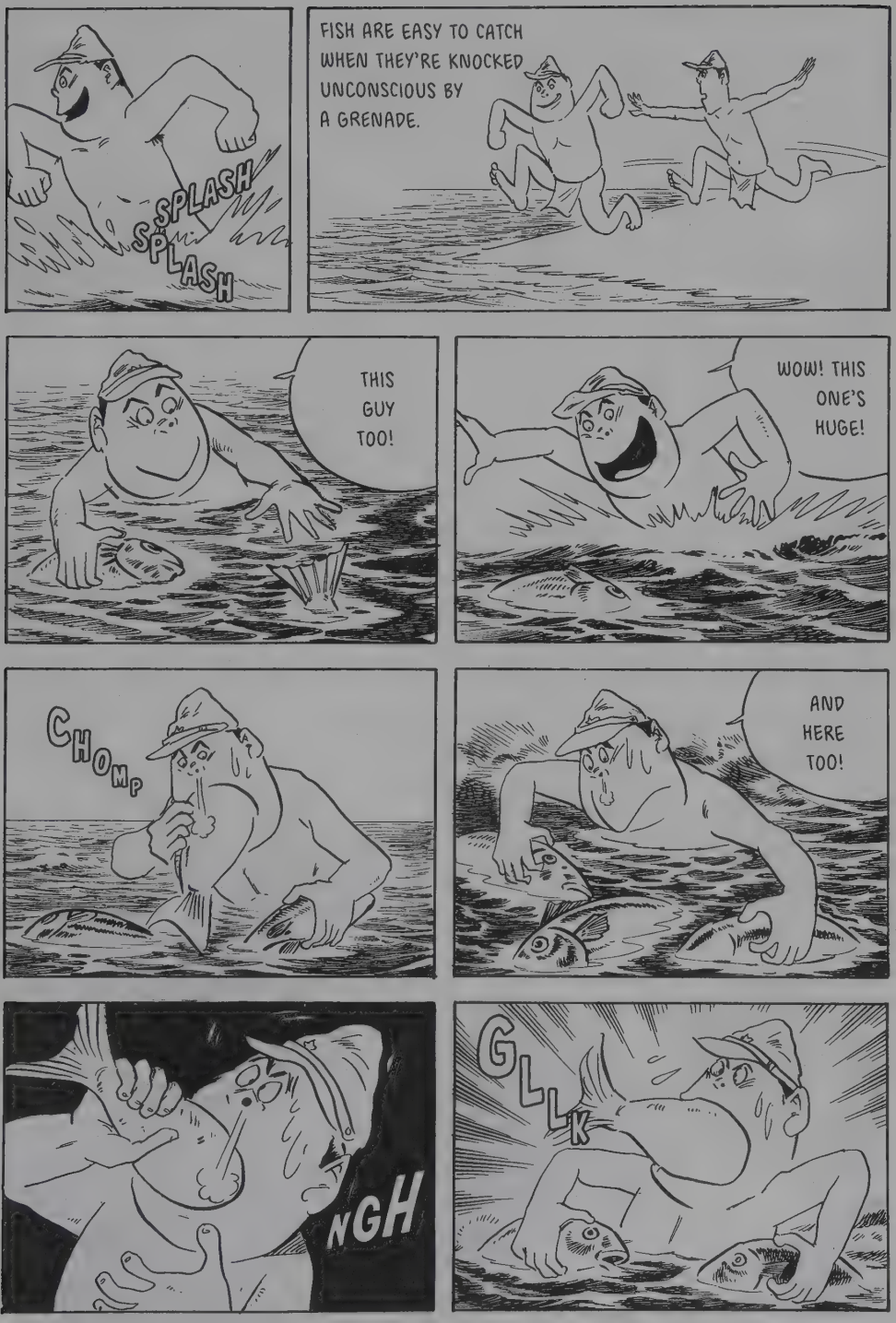
NEW RECRUITS ARE LIKE TATAMI MATS: THE MORE YOU BEAT THEM, THE BETTER THEY ARE.
YOU GET THE MES-SAGE?


SMIRK
YES, THEY DO. THEY DO, DON'T THEY?
CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE WHAT GOES ON IN THE HEADS OF BRASS LIKE HIM.
HE'S JUST MESSING WITH US.
WHAT'S UP WITH HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THERE?
CHALK TOSS
HUP!
ALL RIGHT!
GETTING LATE. SHOULD WE GET TO IT?
BLAM


OF COURSE.
IF WE CATCH SOMETHING, LET'S JUST SLICE IT UP INTO SASHIMI AND CHOW DOWN.
HOOEEE! HA HA!
YOU WANT A SMOKE?
HEY! IT'S COLONEL TADOKORO!
ONE DAY, I'LL KNOCK HIM FLYING...
HE HIT ME WITH THE RICE BUCKET ONCE.
THAT BASTARD KANEDA'S GOT SOME NERVE, HUH?
MM HMM.
SIR!
YES, SIR. THEY DO LOOK VERY SIMILAR.
YOU MEN, DON'T YOU THINK THE TERRAIN OF BAIEN QUITE RESEMBLES MINATOGAWA*?

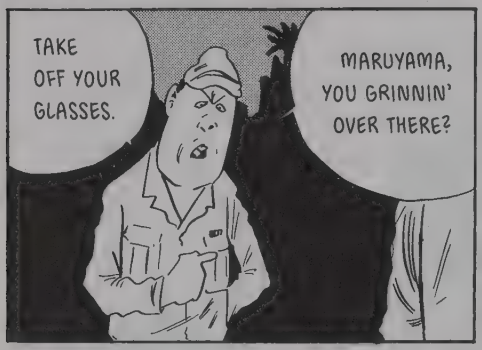
*WHERE THE DECISIVE BATTLE BETWEEN THE IMPERIAL FORCES AND THE REBEL ASHIKAGA CLAN WAS FOUGHT.


SHIT!
GLLK
WHAT'S WRONG?
NAKAMOTO! HANG ON!
NGH
HEY!
NAKAMOTO!

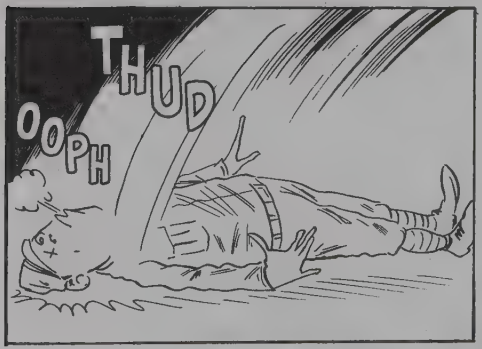

SPLASH
SPLASH
FISH ARE EASY TO CATCH WHEN THEY'RE KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS BY A GRENADE.
THIS GUY TOO!
WOW! THIS ONE'S HUGE!
CHOMP
AND HERE TOO!
NGH
GLLK

ANY QUESTIONS?

WHHAAP


TAKE OFF YOUR GLASSES.
MARUYAMA, YOU GRINNIN' OVER THERE?

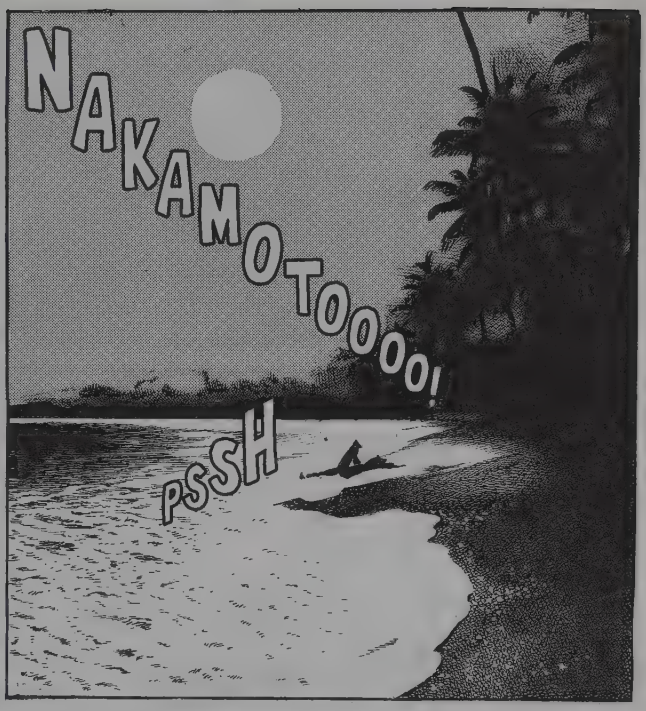
HMPH.
NO SIR

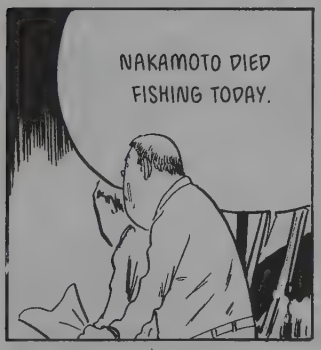

THUD
OOPH

THWAK
SON OF A BITCH!

I'VE GOT MY EYES ON YOU AT ALL TIMES!
UNDERSTAND, MEN?

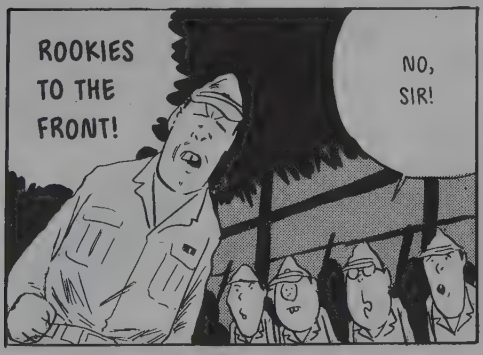
LISTEN UP!

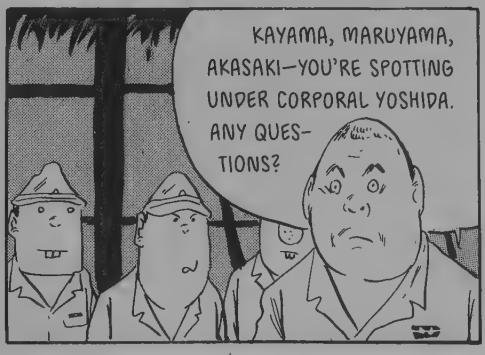

NAKAMOTOOOO!
PSSH

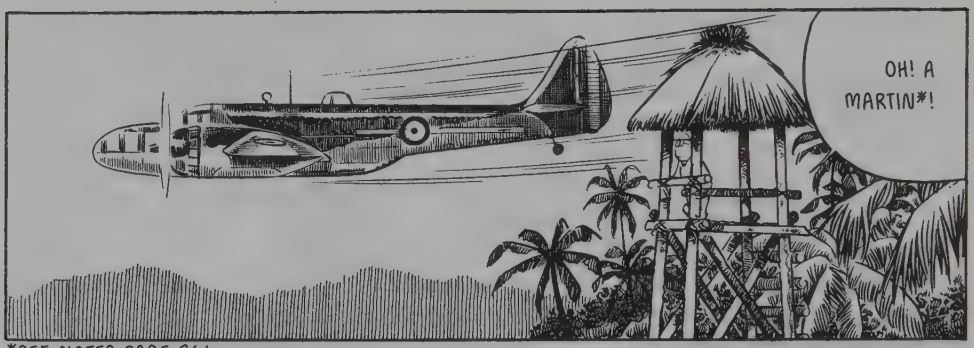

NAKAMOTO DIED FISHING TODAY.

ALSO, ENEMY PLANES HAVE RECENTLY BEEN SIGHTED CIRCLING AROUND, SO WE'RE ASSIGNED TO SPOTTING.

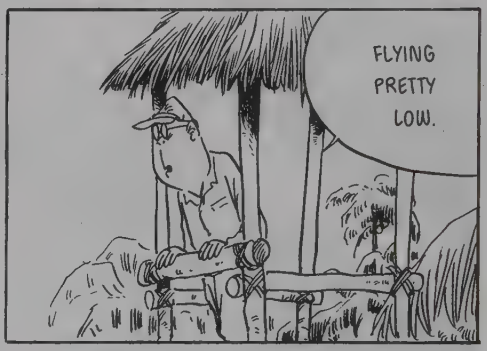
ON THE CAPTAIN'S ORDERS, WE WILL NO LONGER BE FISHING WITH GRENADES.


ROOKIES TO THE FRONT!
NO, SIR!

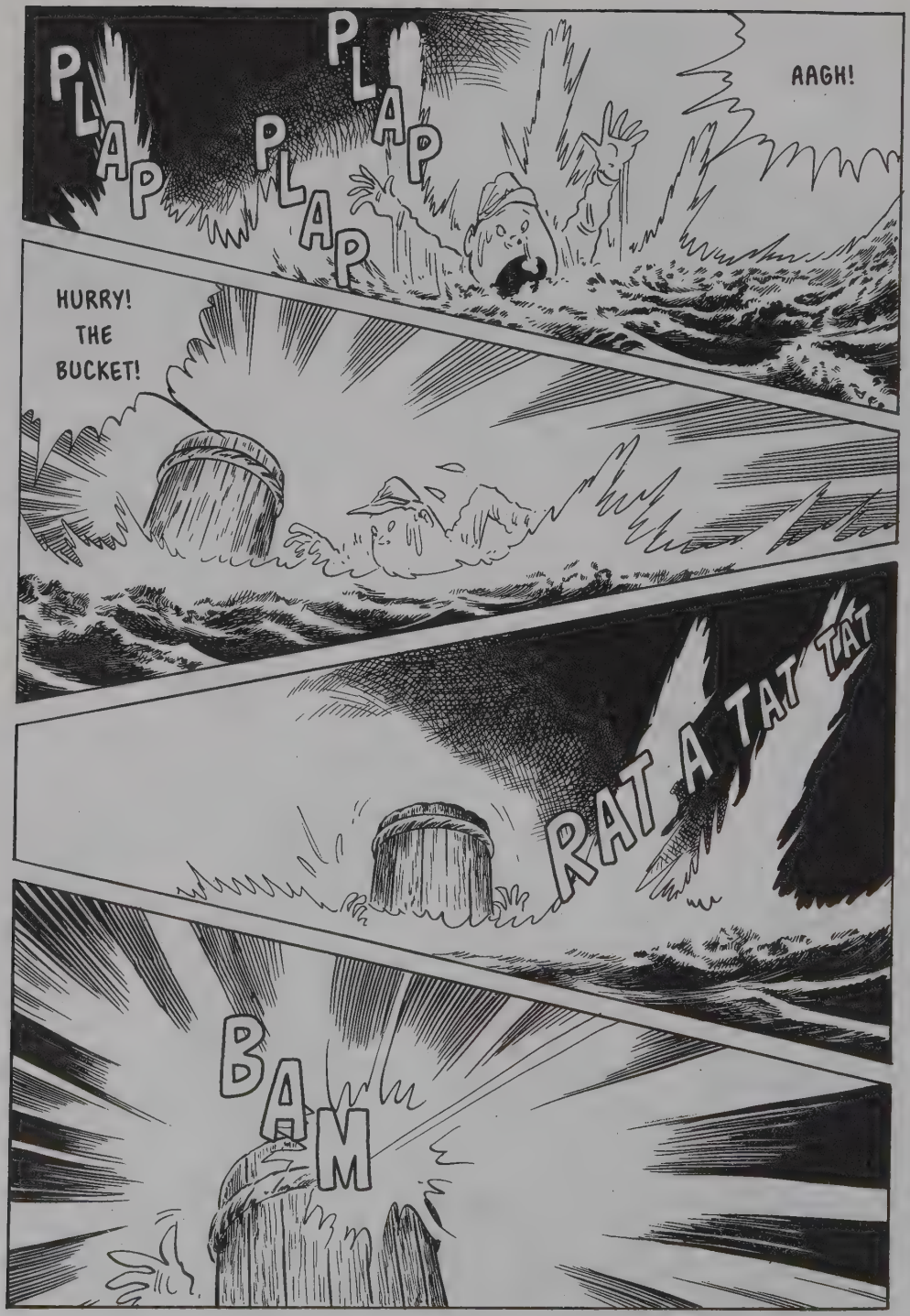

KAYAMA, MARUYAMA, AKASAKI—YOU'RE SPOTTING UNDER CORPORAL YOSHIDA. ANY QUES-TIONS?



*SEE NOTES PAGE 366.

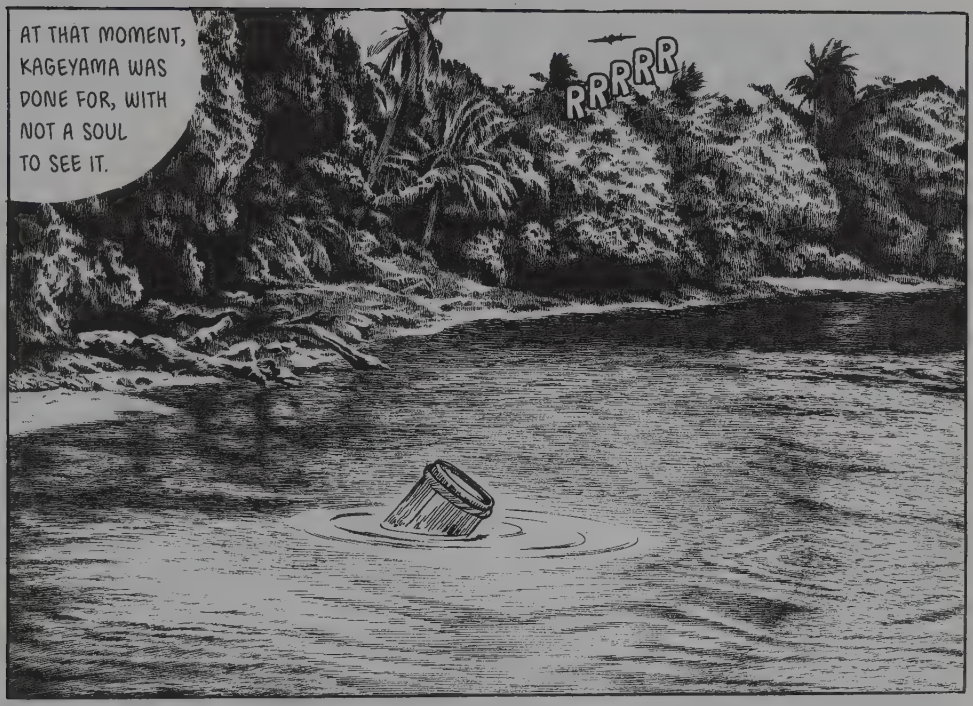


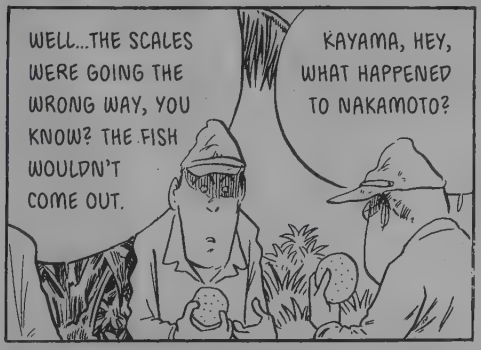
CHEEP
CHEE
CHEE
CHEE
IF IT WASN'T FOR THIS WAR, IT'D BE PRETTY PEACEFUL HERE.
PREE
PREE
PREE


PLAP
PLAP
PLAP
AAGH!
HURRY!
THE
BUCKET!
RAT A TAT TAT
BAM

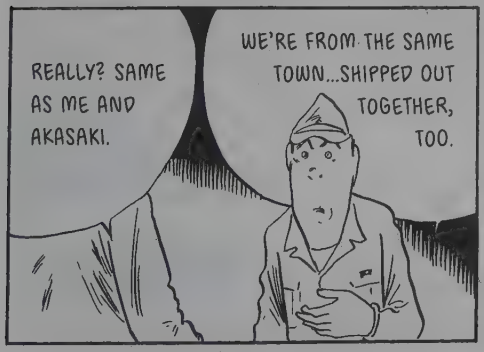
JUST THEN, THE FERRYMAN KAGEYAMA...
CHK CHK CHK
WHAT THE HELL?
RAT A TAT TAT
PYOO
AAGH
SPLASH
VROOOOOOM
AAGH

WE WERE SEPARATED ON THE SHIP AND AT KOKOPO. THEN BACK TOGETHER AGAIN HERE IN BAIEN.
AND WE ALWAYS GOT THE SAME TRANSFERS.
WE MET ON THE TRAIN ON OUR WAY TO THE REGIMENT.
MEH, SOMETHING GOOD'LL HAPPEN ON THE WAY.
WE PROB'LY ALL GOT THE SAME TICKET TO HELL. HA HA HA.
HMM, YEAH.
PROB'LY DESTINY OR SOMETHING.
HOOO
HOOO


AT THAT MOMENT, KAGEYAMA WAS DONE FOR, WITH NOT A SOUL TO SEE IT.
RRRRR


WELL...THE SCALES WERE GOING THE WRONG WAY, YOU KNOW? THE FISH WOULDN'T COME OUT.
KAYAMA, HEY, WHAT HAPPENED TO NAKAMOTO?

MAYBE THEY THOUGHT WE WERE PIGS OR SOME-THING.
THEY'RE FINALLY GONE.

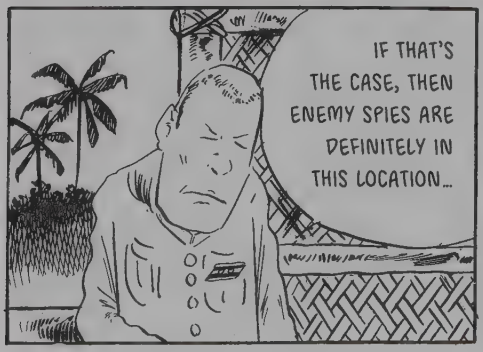

REALLY? SAME AS ME AND AKASAKI.
WE'RE FROM THE SAME TOWN...SHIPPED OUT TOGETHER, TOO.

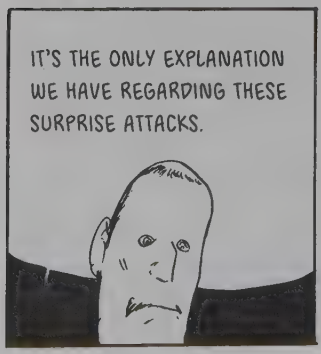
LOOK, I DON'T WANNA TALK ABOUT NAKAMOTO.
THAT'S A WEIRD WAY TO DIE, HUH?

CHRIST.
HMPH.
I'LL BE MORE CAREFUL IN THE FUTURE, SIR.
YOU SAID IT.
PSSSSH
ONE OF THESE DAYS, I'D LIKE TO GIVE IT BACK TO HIM.
JESUS, YOU'VE GOT A BIG ONE!
HOLY—
OKAY, I'M GETTING IN.
HOLY SHIT!
YOU'RE COVERING WITH BOTH HANDS AND IT'S STILL STICKING OUT BELOW.
N-NO, I DON'T.

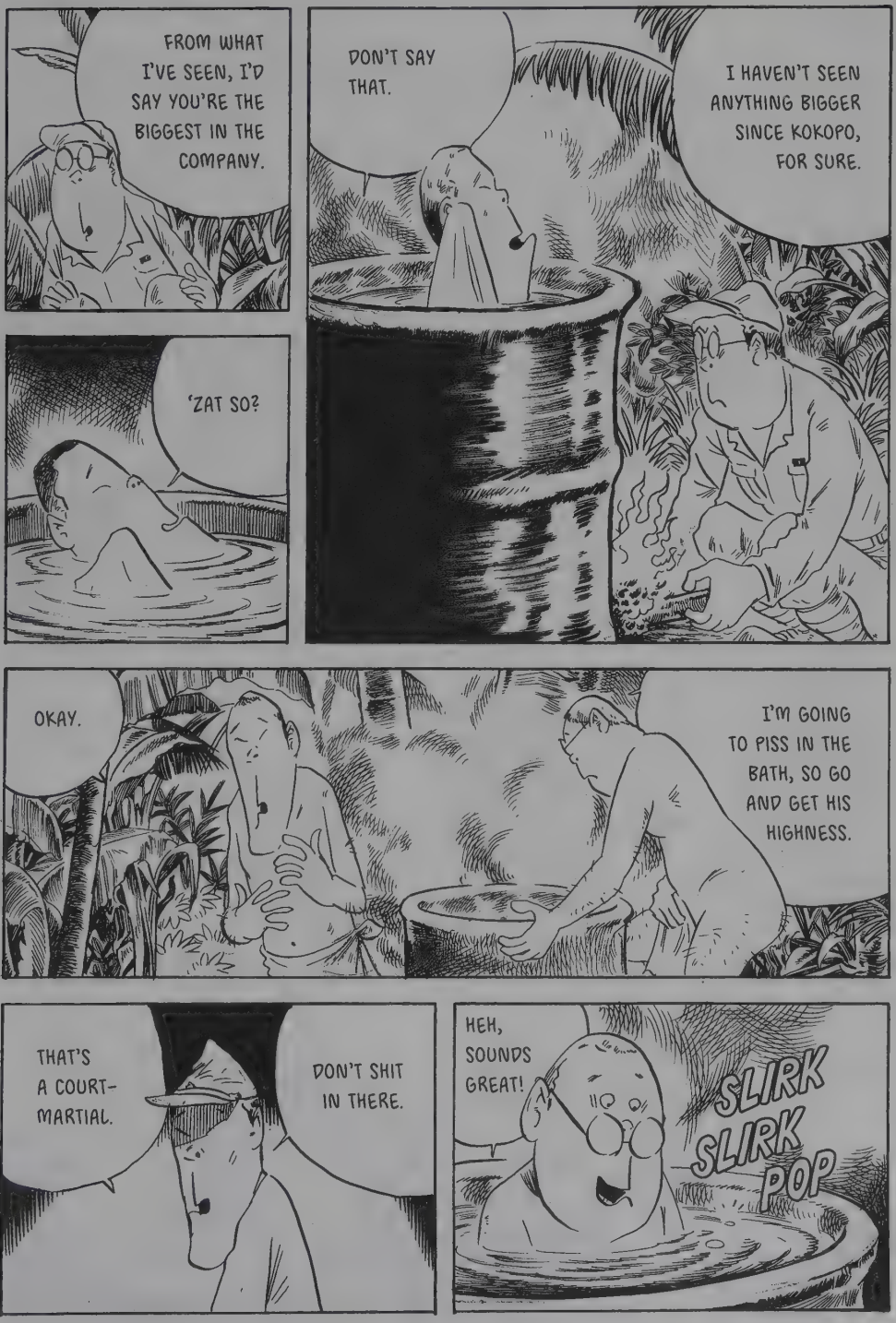
LITTLE FINGER

WHAT'S THIS!
UH, SIR?
C'MON, CARRY IT RIGHT. THE WATER'S SPILLING.
SO YOU'RE WITH ME ON BATH DUTY, HUH?
YES, SIR.
LOOKS ALMOST AS IF ONE OF YOUR STARS HAS FALLEN OFF, DOESN'T IT?!
YOU THINK THE ARMY'S A JOKE?!
JUST WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING WITH YOUR STARS LIKE THAT!
WHUMP
YOU'RE REALLY SOMETHING, YOU KNOW THAT?!
DON'T 'YES, SIR' ME!



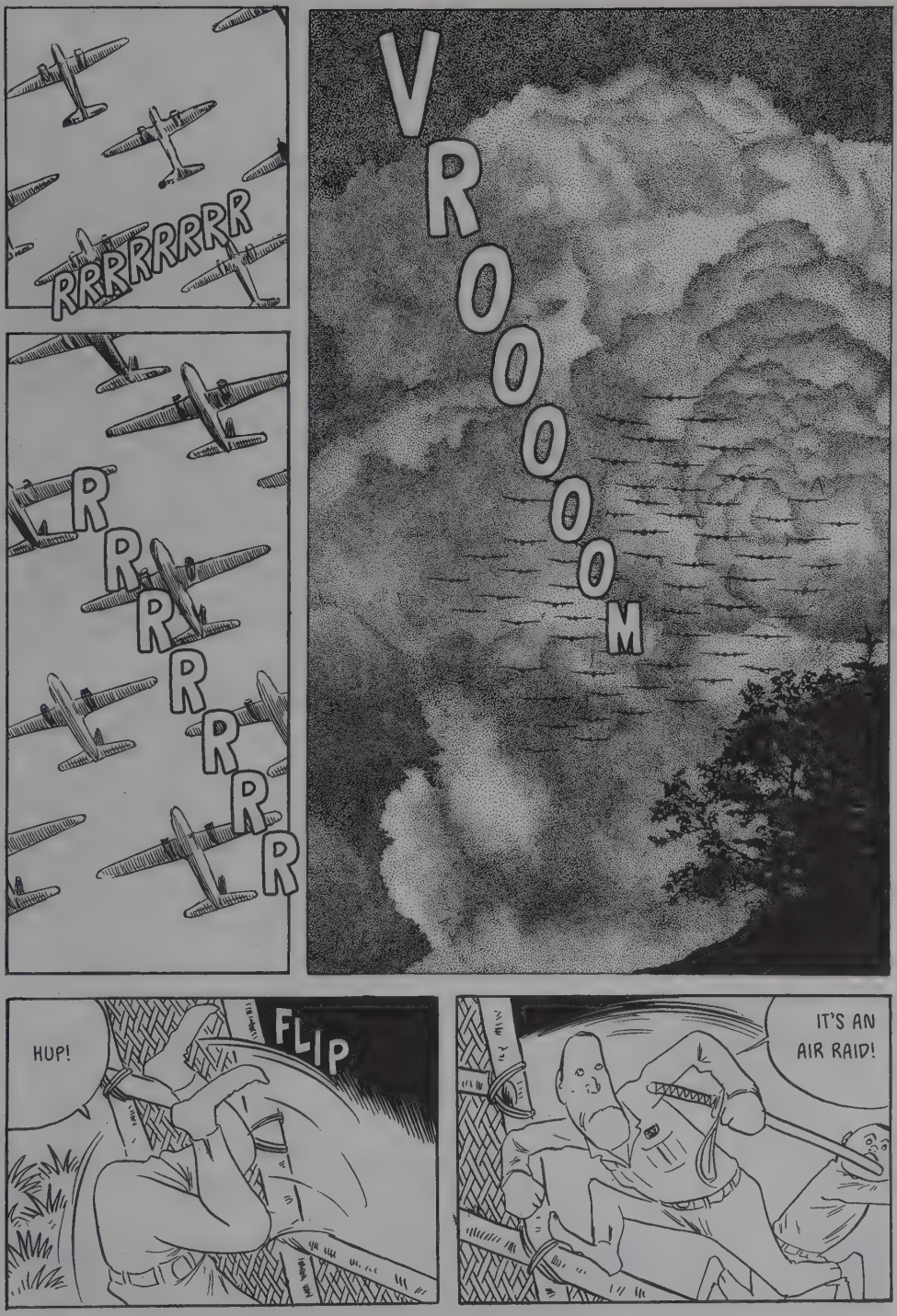


*SEE NOTES PAGE 366.

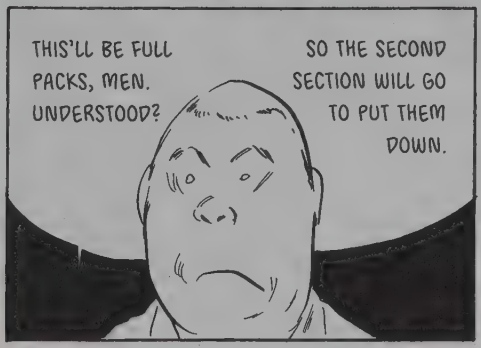

FROM WHAT I'VE SEEN, I'D SAY YOU'RE THE BIGGEST IN THE COMPANY.
DON'T SAY THAT.
I HAVEN'T SEEN ANYTHING BIGGER SINCE KOKOPO, FOR SURE.
'ZAT SO?
OKAY.
I'M GOING TO PISS IN THE BATH, SO GO AND GET HIS HIGHNESS.
THAT'S A COURT-MARTIAL.
DON'T SHIT IN THERE.
HEH, SOUNDS GREAT!
SLIRK SLIRK POP

BOOM

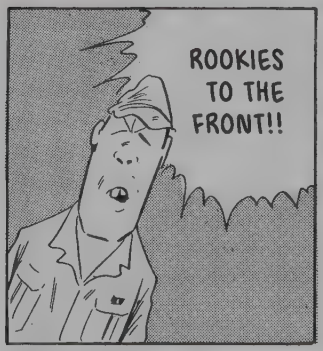
RATATATATATATA
VROOOOOOMM


RRRRRRRR
R
R
R
R
R
R
R
VROOOOOOM
HUP!
FLIP
IT'S AN AIR RAID!

THANK YOU, SIR.
YOU'RE A GOOD SOLDIER. ONE OF THESE DAYS, I'LL GIVE YOU A COMMENDATION.


THIS'LL BE FULL PACKS, MEN. UNDERSTOOD?
SO THE SECOND SECTION WILL GO TO PUT THEM DOWN.

THE ENEMY APPEARS TO BE IN THE MIREM INTERIOR...
LISTEN UP!


ROOKIES TO THE FRONT!!

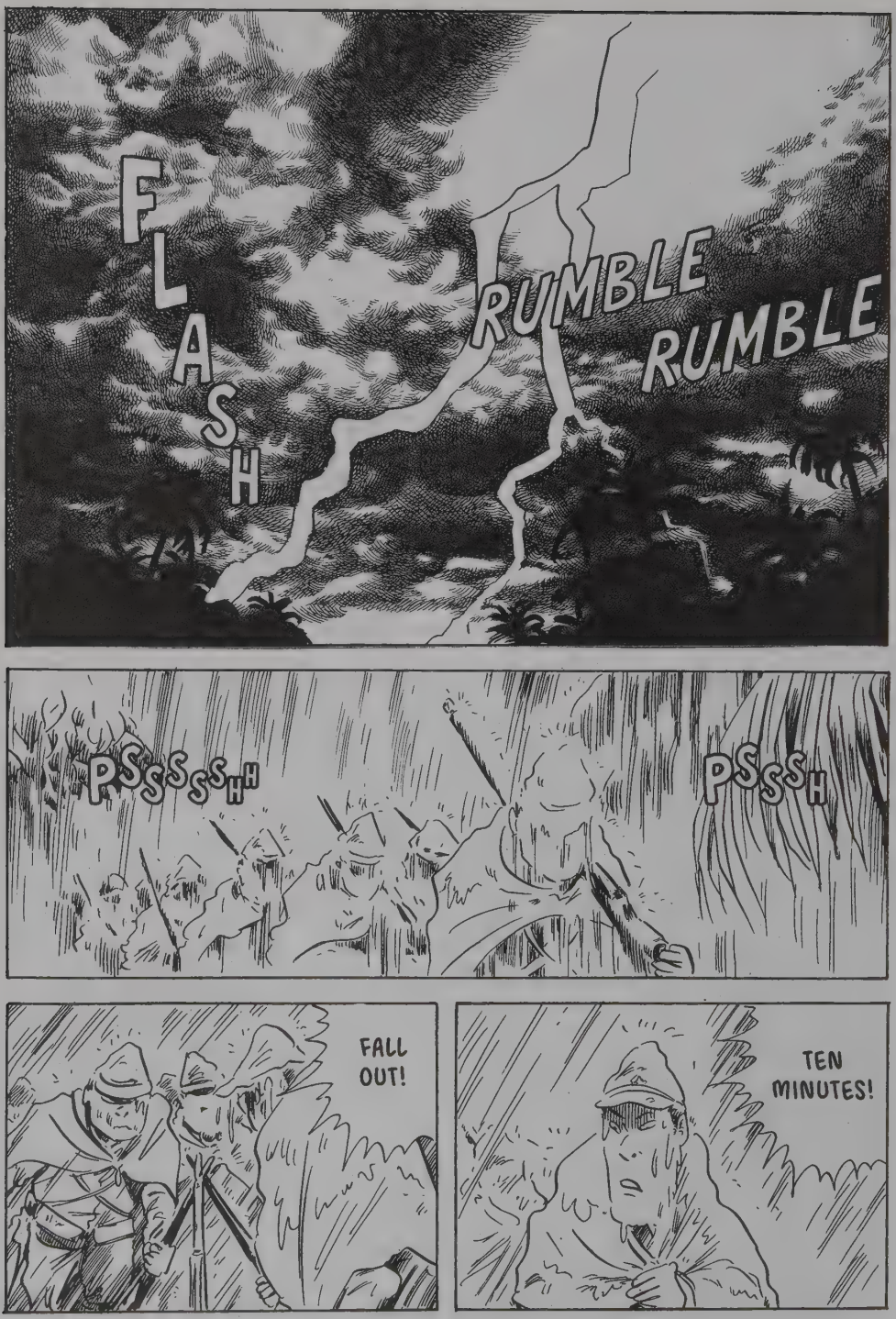
UNDERSTOOD, SIR

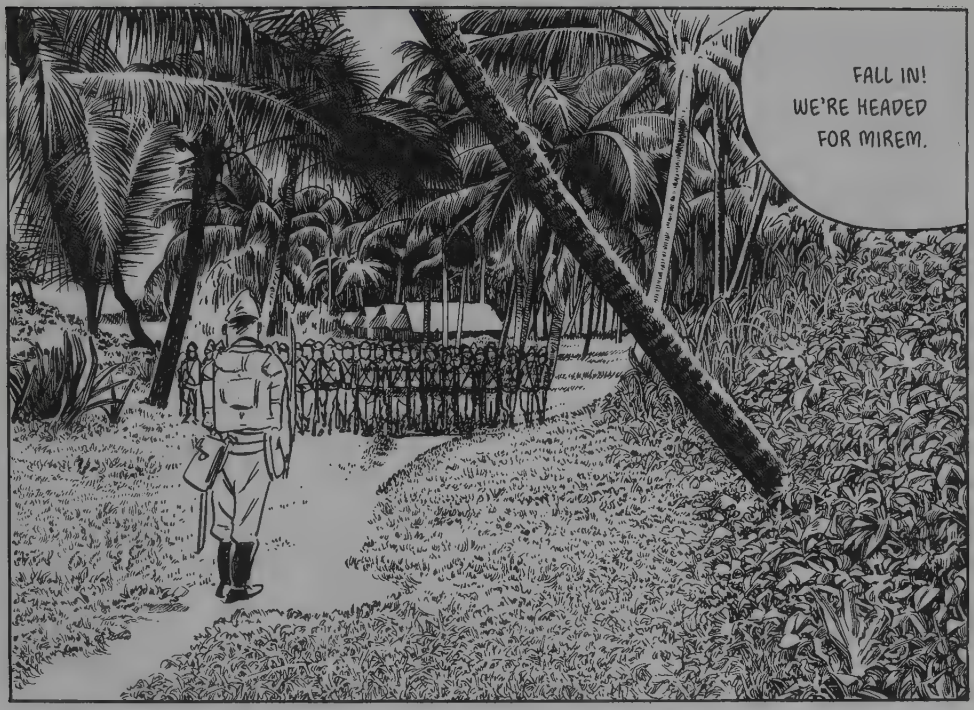
WHAP

WHAAP WHAP

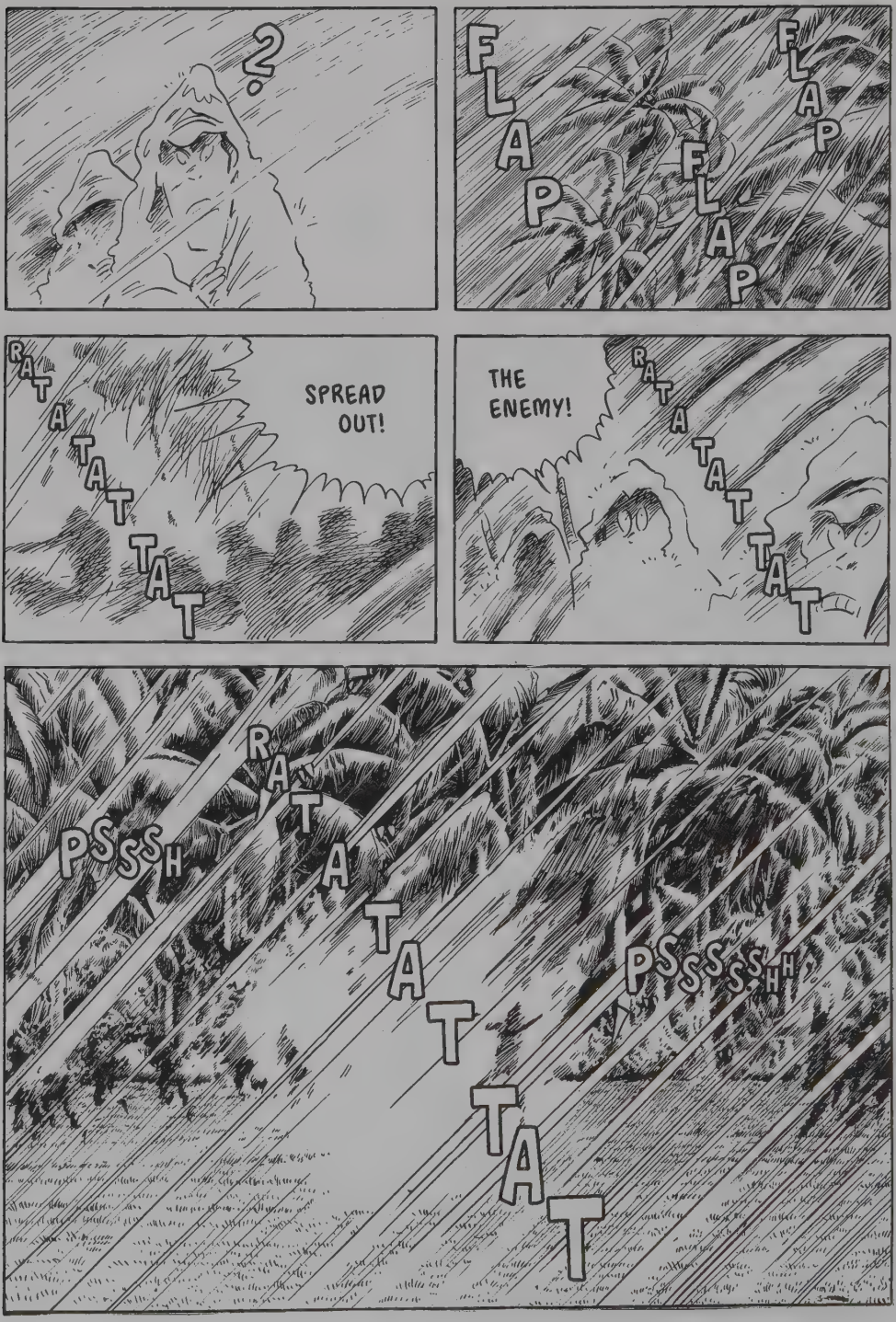
GIVEN THAT THEY ALL MISSED US...
THEY'RE FLEEING.
WE MUST PUT DOWN THESE SPIES RIGHT AWAY.
IN ANY CASE...
I'D SAY THEY WERE ON THEIR WAY TO RABAUL AND TOOK THE CHANCE TO BOMB US.
I'M GOING TO TAKE MY BATH.
YES, SIR.
WELL THEN, HAVE THE SECOND SECTION GO.
MMM.
SHALL I WASH YOUR BACK FOR YOU, SIR*?
MMM.
IS THE TEMP-ERATURE ALL RIGHT, SIR?

*JAPAN HAS A COMMUNAL BATHING CULTURE; OFFERS TO WASH BACKS ARE NATURAL AND COMMON.


FLASH
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
PSSSSSSH
PSSSH
FALL OUT!
TEN MINUTES!


FALL IN! WE'RE HEADED FOR MIREM.

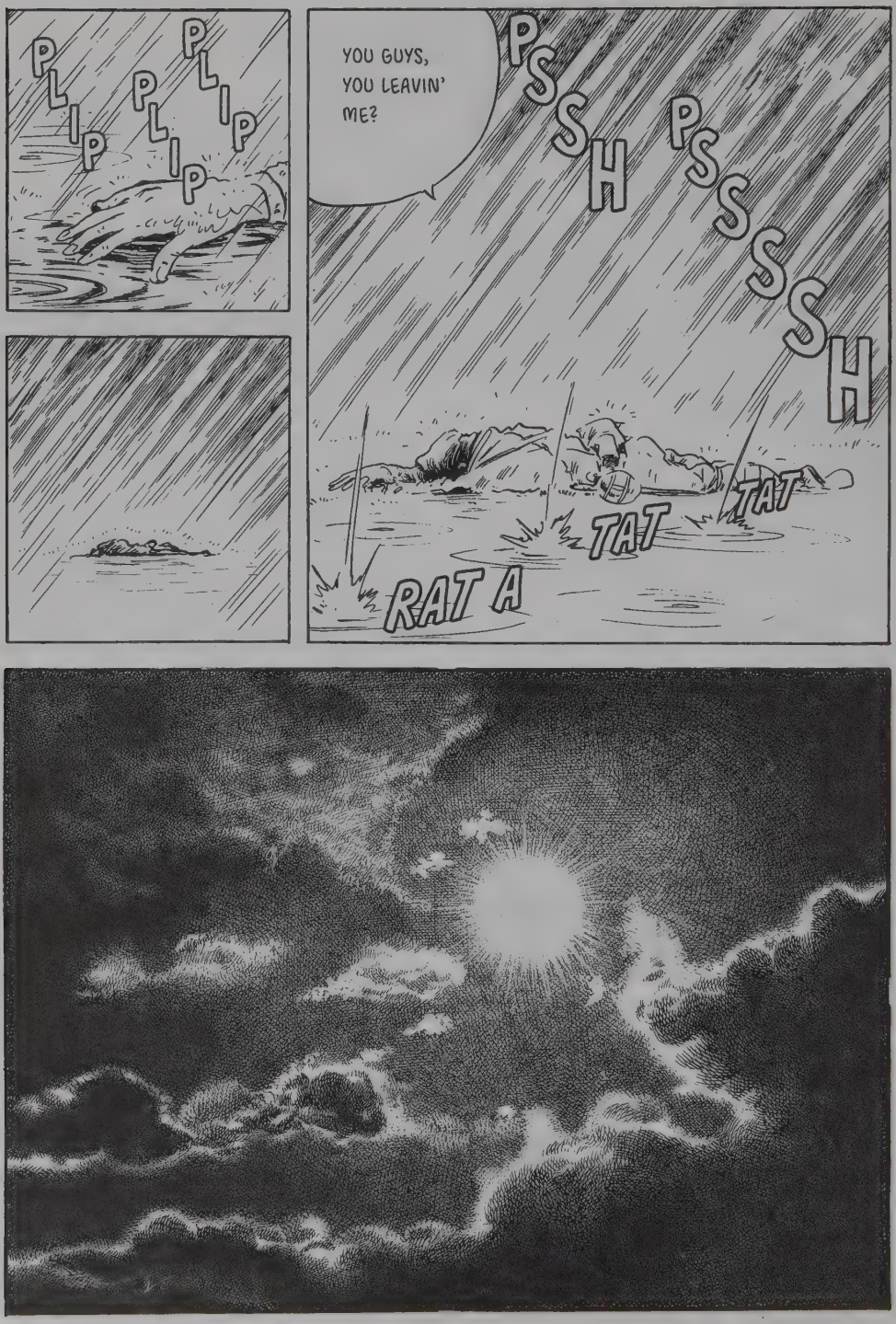
MOVE OUT!
TAK TAK


?
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
RATATATATAT
SPREAD OUT!
THE ENEMY!
RATATATATAT
PSSSH
RATATATATAT
PSSSSSH

HERE.
YOU GOT ANY CIGARETTES?
YUP.
DEFINITELY WON'T BE ABLE TO SLEEP IN THIS WEATHER, HUH, DOC?
WHAT D'YOU THINK HAPPENS WHEN PEOPLE DIE IN THE FIELD?
DON'T BE STUPID.
MUST BE NICE TO BE A CORPSMAN INSTEAD OF AN ENLISTED MAN.
MOVE OUT!
I HAVE TO PICK UP THE BONES, CARRY THE INJURED. NOT AS EASY AS IT LOOKS.
PSSSH
PSSSSHH

IF WE'RE NOT QUICK, HE'LL FALL INTO ENEMY HANDS.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!
I'LL HAVE TO CUT OFF KAYAMA'S FINGER. HELP ME.
PSSSSSSSSSH
PSSSSH
I'M STILL ALIVE, GUYS!
RATATATTATAT
KAYAMA!
TO PROVE HE DIED IN BATTLE.
WE GOTTA GET HIS LITTLE FINGER OFF QUICK.

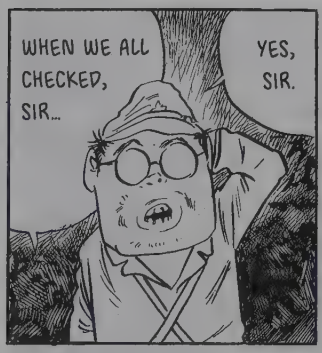
NGGH
AH!
PING
KAYAMA
RAT A TAT
ROLL
ROLL
ROLL
RETREAT!
HUH?
HOLD UP!
PSSSSSSSSH
PSSSSSH

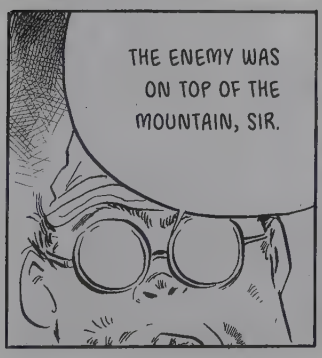

PLIP PLIP PLIP PLIP
YOU GUYS, YOU LEAVIN' ME?
PSSH PSSSSH
RAT A TAT TAT

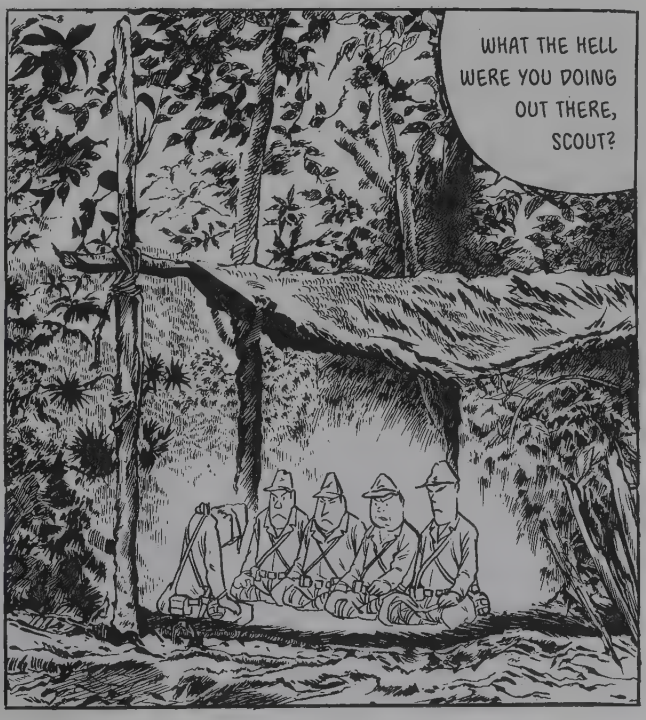
TUNK
TUNK
O-O-OKAY.
I'LL HOLD HIM DOWN. YOU TAKE IT OFF WITH THE SHOVEL.
PYOO
WOULD YOU JUST HURRY UP AND DO IT?
FOOF
IT'S NOT COMIN' OFF.
PS-S-S-SH
PS-S-S-S-S-S-H
UNH!

SKRITCH
SKRITCH
YES, SIR.
NOW THEN...
YOU'RE IN THE ARMY. IT IS JUST 'WE.' GOT IT?
WHAT'S WITH THIS BUMPKINLY 'WE ALL?'
WE'LL SPLIT INTO FOUR GROUPS AND SURROUND THEM.
WE KNOW NOW THAT THE ENEMY IS IN THAT GENERAL DIRECTION.
SHOULD THE FIRST SECTION GO FIRST?
SO IF THAT'S WHAT WE'RE DOING...
THERE CAN'T BE MORE THAN TWENTY OF THEM.

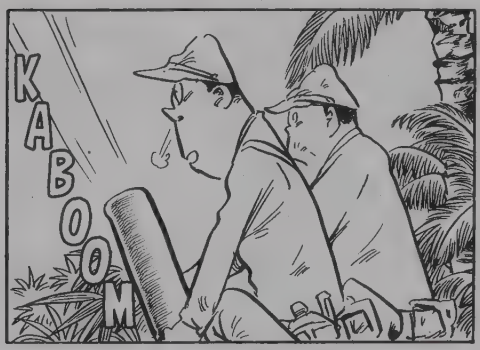
ALL BECAUSE THEM SCOUTS AIN'T DOING THEIR JOBS.


WHEN WE ALL CHECKED, SIR...
YES, SIR.

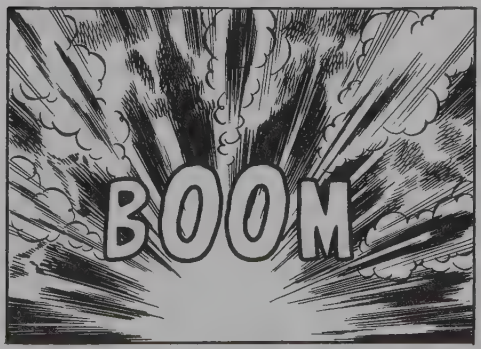

THE ENEMY WAS ON TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN, SIR.

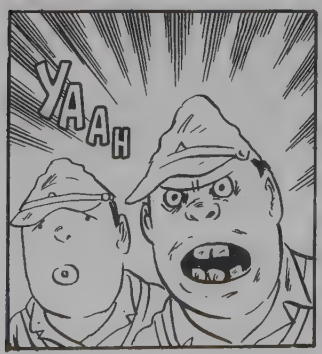

WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU DOING OUT THERE, SCOUT?

CHAK
CHAK

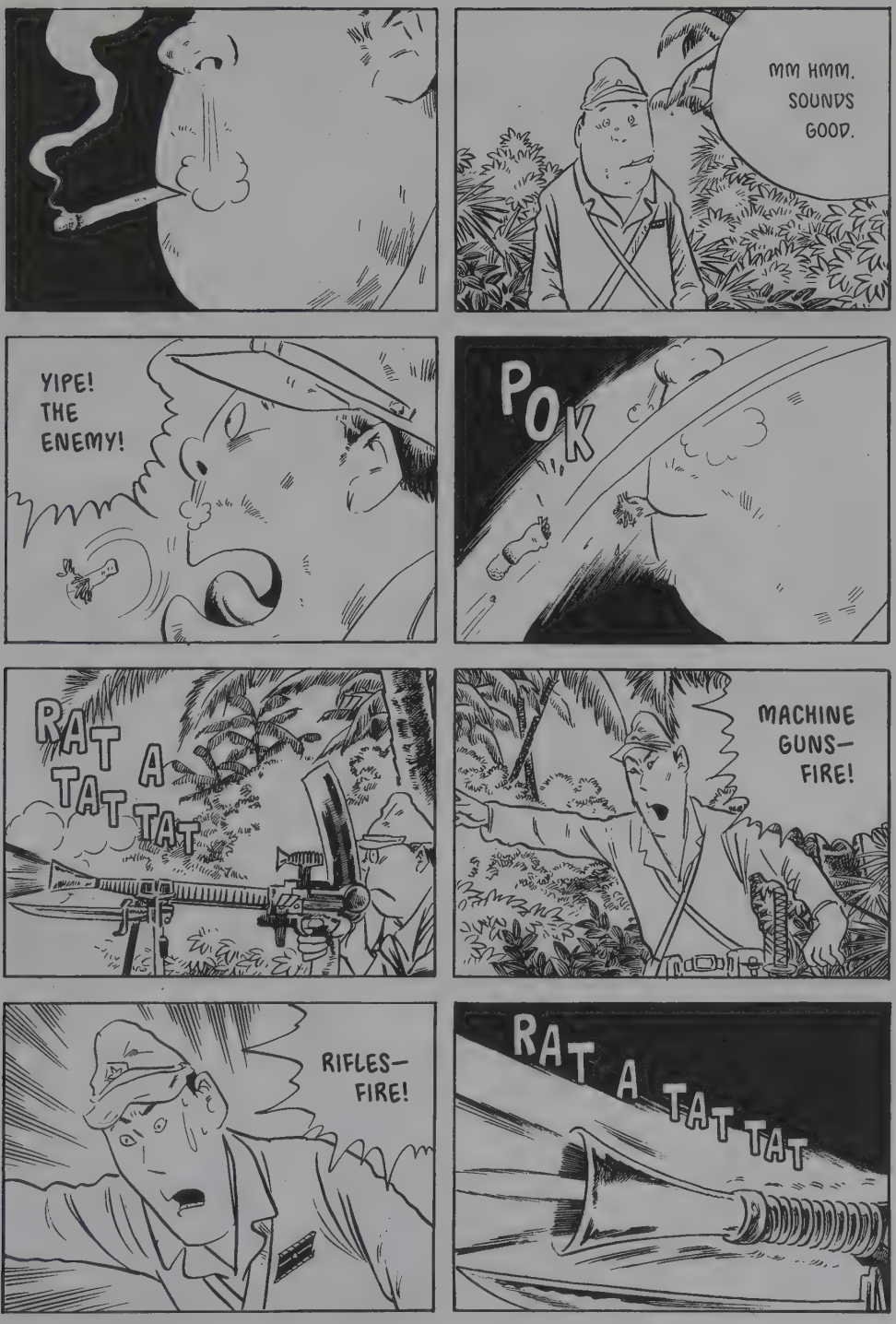

KABOOM

FIRE!
GET FIRIN' THAT GRENADE LAUNCHER.


BOOM

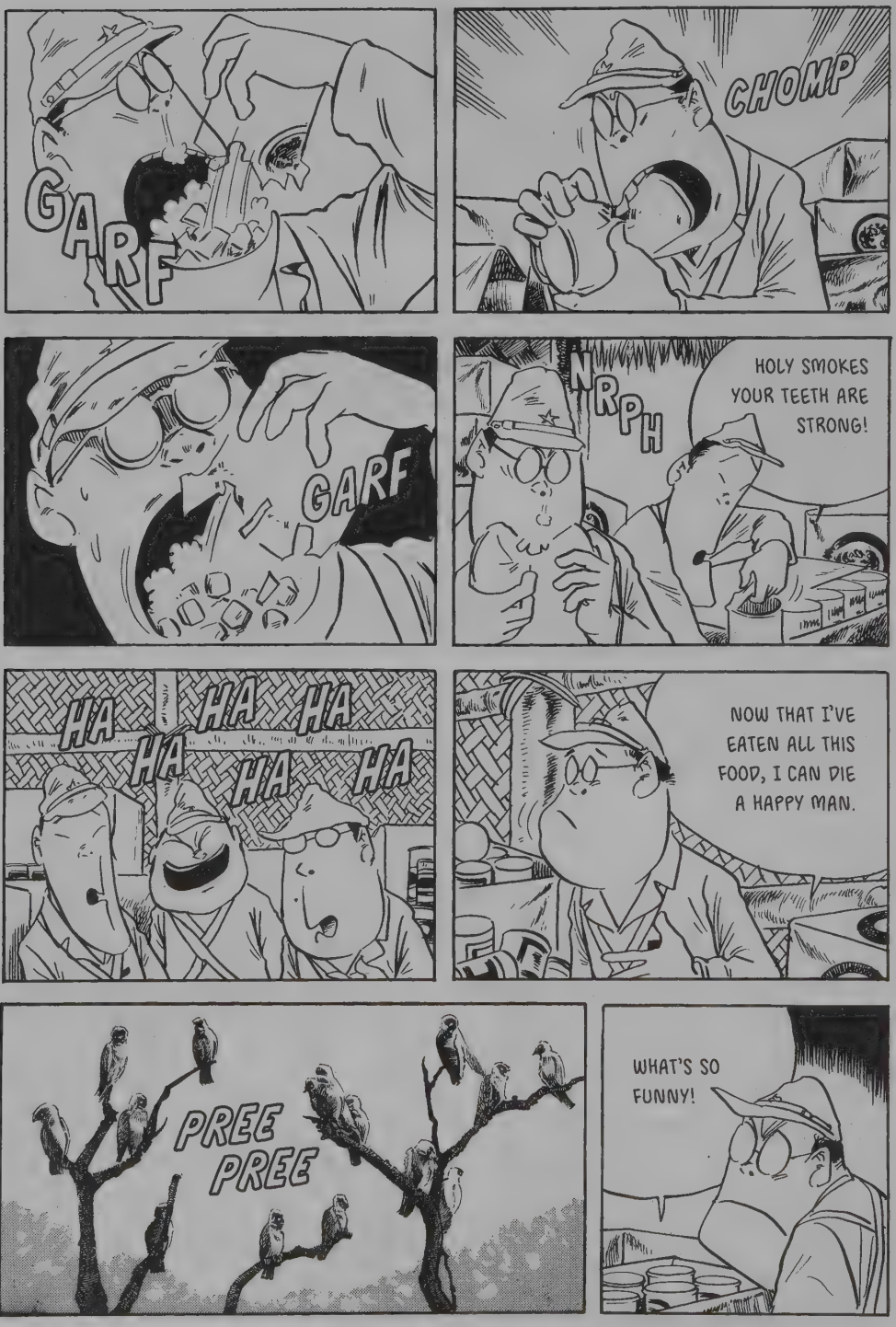

YAAH

READY—
ATTACK!

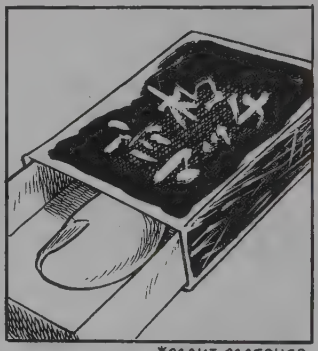

MM HMM. SOUNDS GOOD.
YIPE! THE ENEMY!
POK
RAT A TAT TAT
MACHINE GUNS— FIRE!
RIFLES— FIRE!
RAT A TAT TAT

YUP, THEY'RE GONE.
AND THERE'S CHOCOLATE, TOO!
HOLY SHIT! CANNED FOOD!
THOSE BASTARDS ARE LIVING LIKE KINGS FIGHTING THIS WAR.
WH-WHAT THE HELL...
UH UH!
YOU SAID IT.

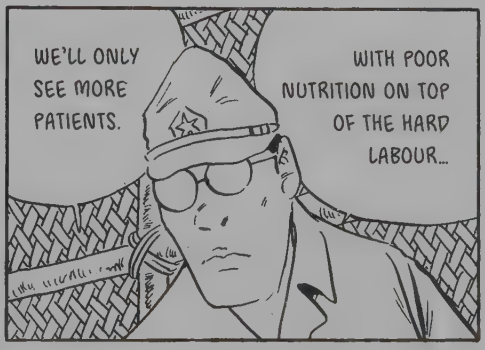
YAAAH
MACHINE-GUN THAT HOUSE!!
THE BASTARDS HAVE RUN OFF.
SILENCE
RAT-A-TAT TAT-TAT

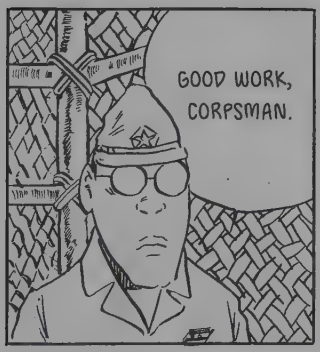

GARF
CHOMP
GARF
NRPH
HOLY SMOKES YOUR TEETH ARE STRONG!
HA HA HA HA HA HA
NOW THAT I'VE EATEN ALL THIS FOOD, I CAN DIE A HAPPY MAN.
PREE PREE
WHAT'S SO FUNNY!

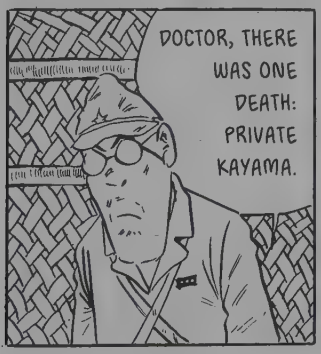
YUM!
YOU ASSHOLE!
YOU DON'T GET TREATS LIKE THIS.
ROOKIE LIKE YOU...
WHAAAAAP
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
I FOUND THE CHOCOLATE FIRST. OPEN YOUR MOUTH, ROOKIE, AND I'LL SEND YOU FLYING.
WHOA, MARUYAMA!
WHAT THE—
HEY! CANNED FOOD!
THAT BASTARD.



*MAKI MATCHES




GOOD WORK, CORPSMAN.


DOCTOR, THERE WAS ONE DEATH: PRIVATE KAYAMA.

PSSSSSH

REAL BEAUTIES AND I STARE WITHOUT CARE
AND HERE I AM
HEY HEY
THREE DAYS HEY HEY
HA HA HA HA
IN THE HOLE FOR ME!

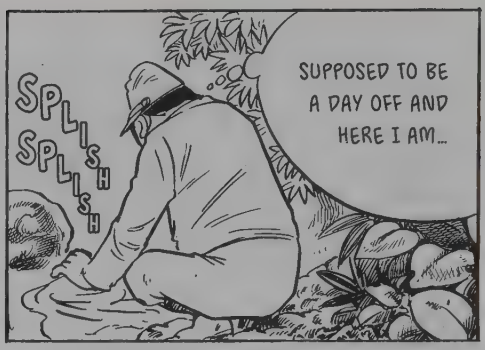
NEW YEAR'S

*SEE NOTES PAGE 366.

UH, YES.
YOU DO WANNA DO IT, RIGHT?
YOU BETTER.
I'LL DO IT RIGHT AWAY.
SKRTCH SKRTCH
OH, THAT'D BE GOOD.
MY LAUNDRY!?
HMM?
SERGEANT, PLEASE LET ME WASH YOUR UNIFORM!
SKRTCH SKRTCH

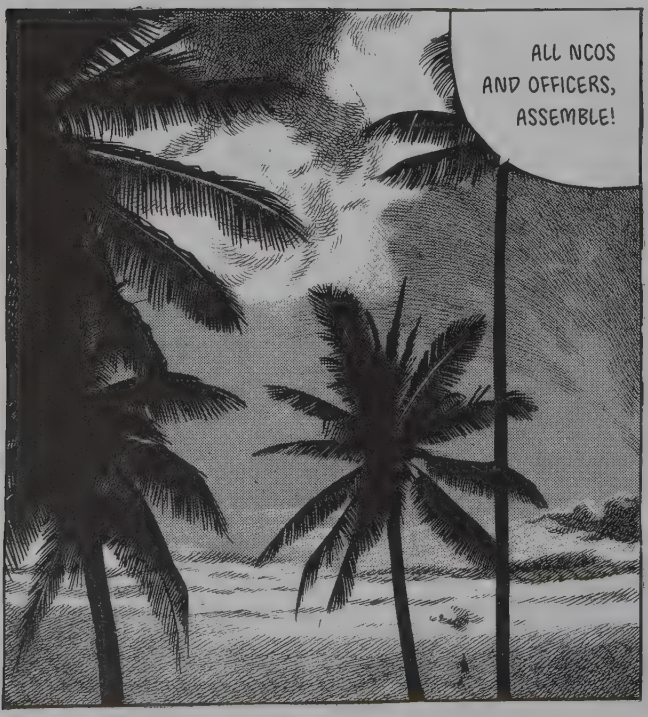
HEE HEE
HEE HEE
HO HO
HO HO
YOU BEST REMEMBER YOURSELF.
SIR, I APOLOGIZE.
GETTIN' A BIT CARRIED AWAY, AREN'T YOU?
BOINK
NOT YET.
UH...
YOU WASHED THE SERGEANT'S UNIFORM?
YES, SIR.
IT'S JUST YOU WHO HASN'T.
ALL YOU ROOKIES GOTTA DO IT!
COME ON!

DAMMIT! THERE'S SHIT STUCK TO THESE.


SPLISH SPLISH
SUPPOSED TO BE A DAY OFF AND HERE I AM...

SQUAAWK AAWK

PLOSH


ALL NCOS AND OFFICERS, ASSEMBLE!

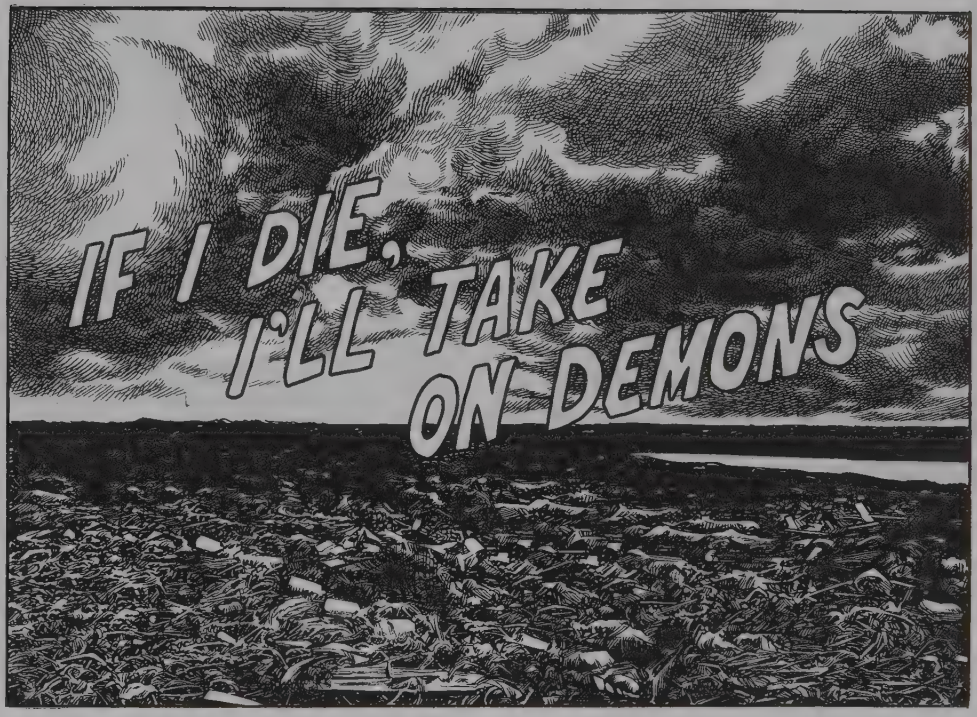
GODDAMNED PARROT.

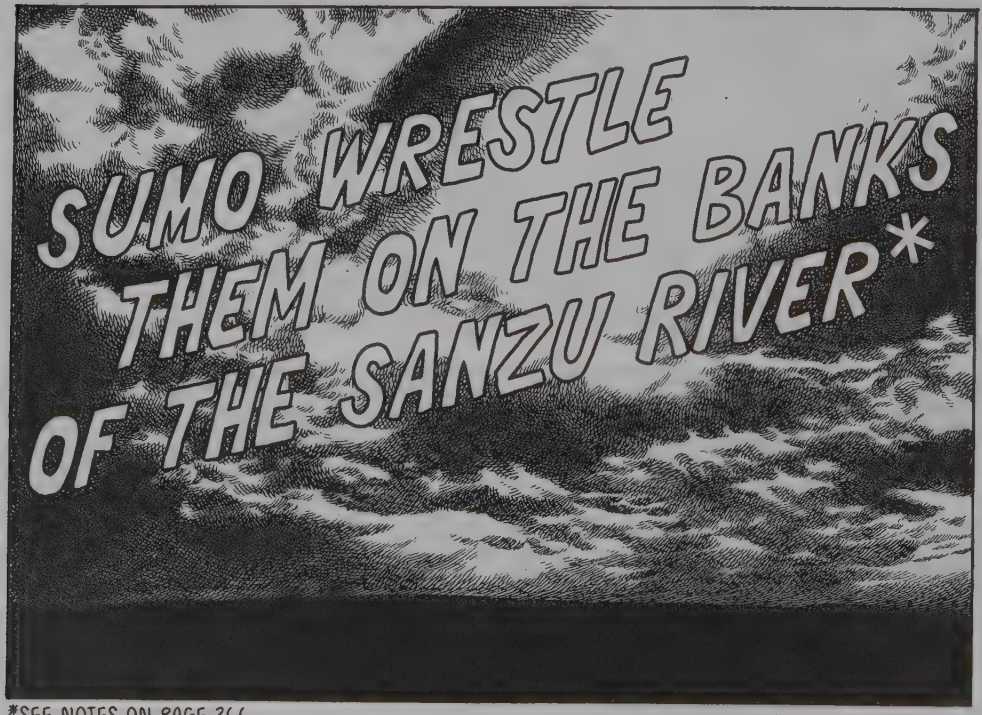
PFFT

CHRIST. HIS SKIVVIES, TOO?

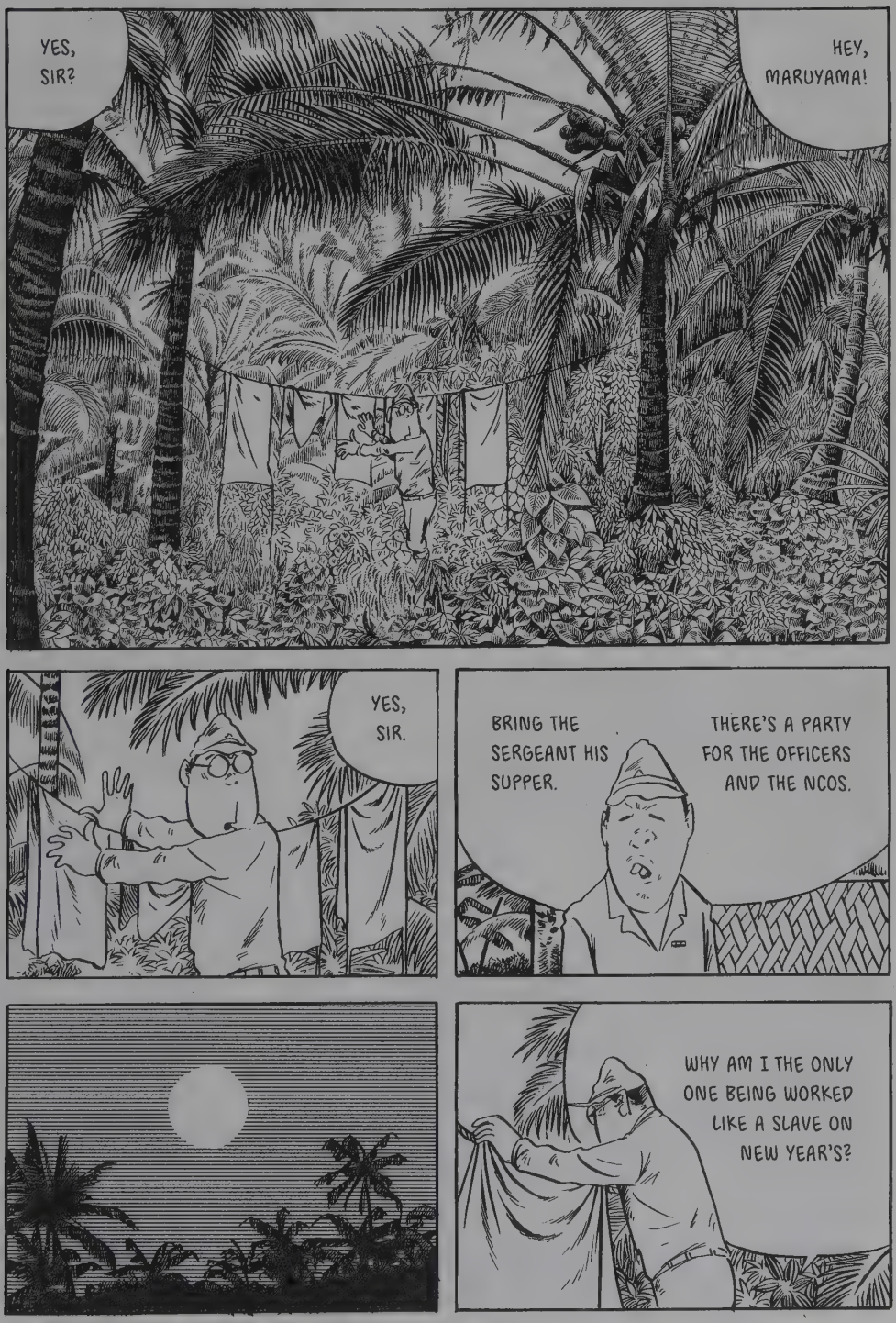
YES, SIR.
WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, CAN YOU DO MY SKIVVIES, TOO?

HEY! I STILL HAVE A BUNCH MORE HERE.

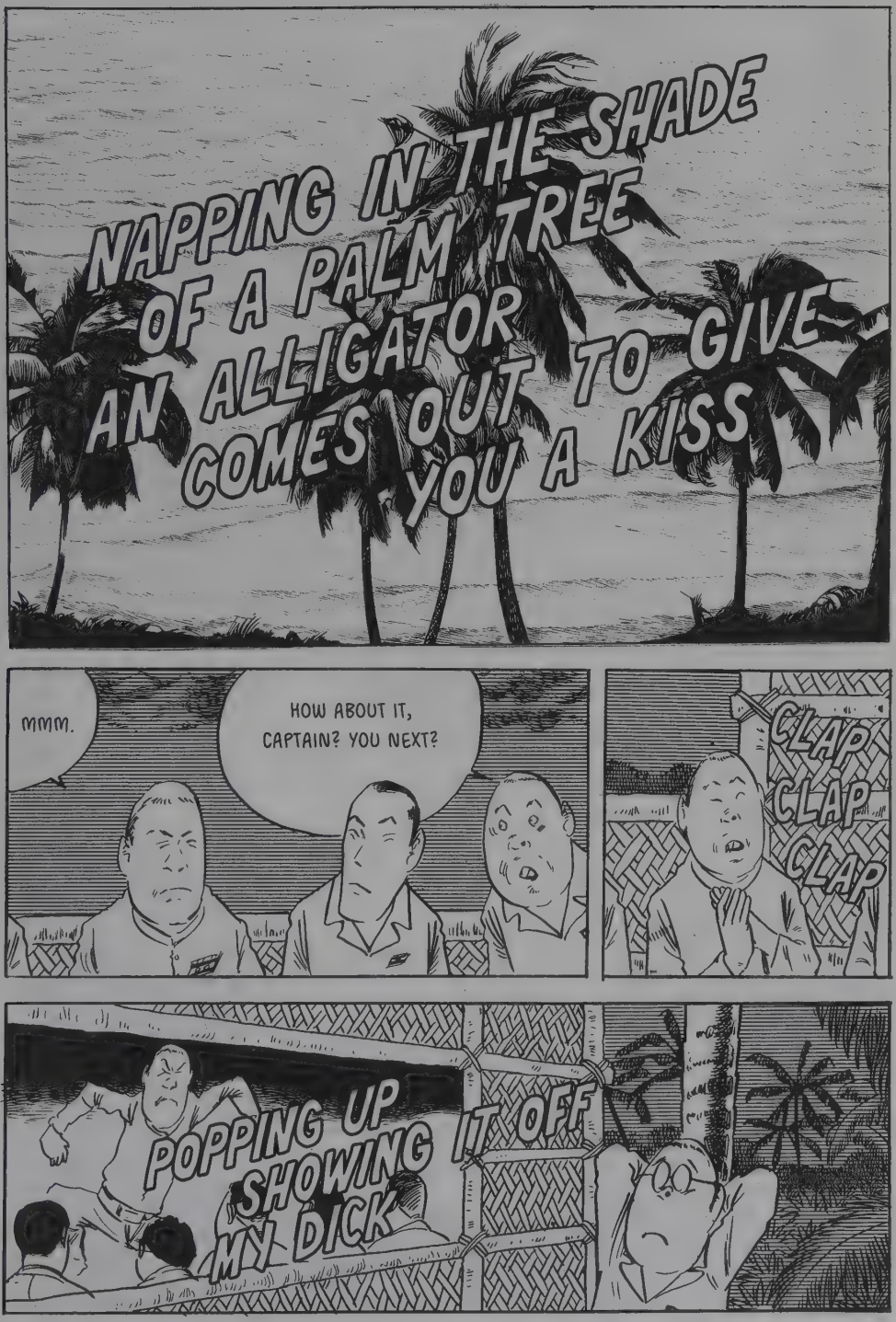


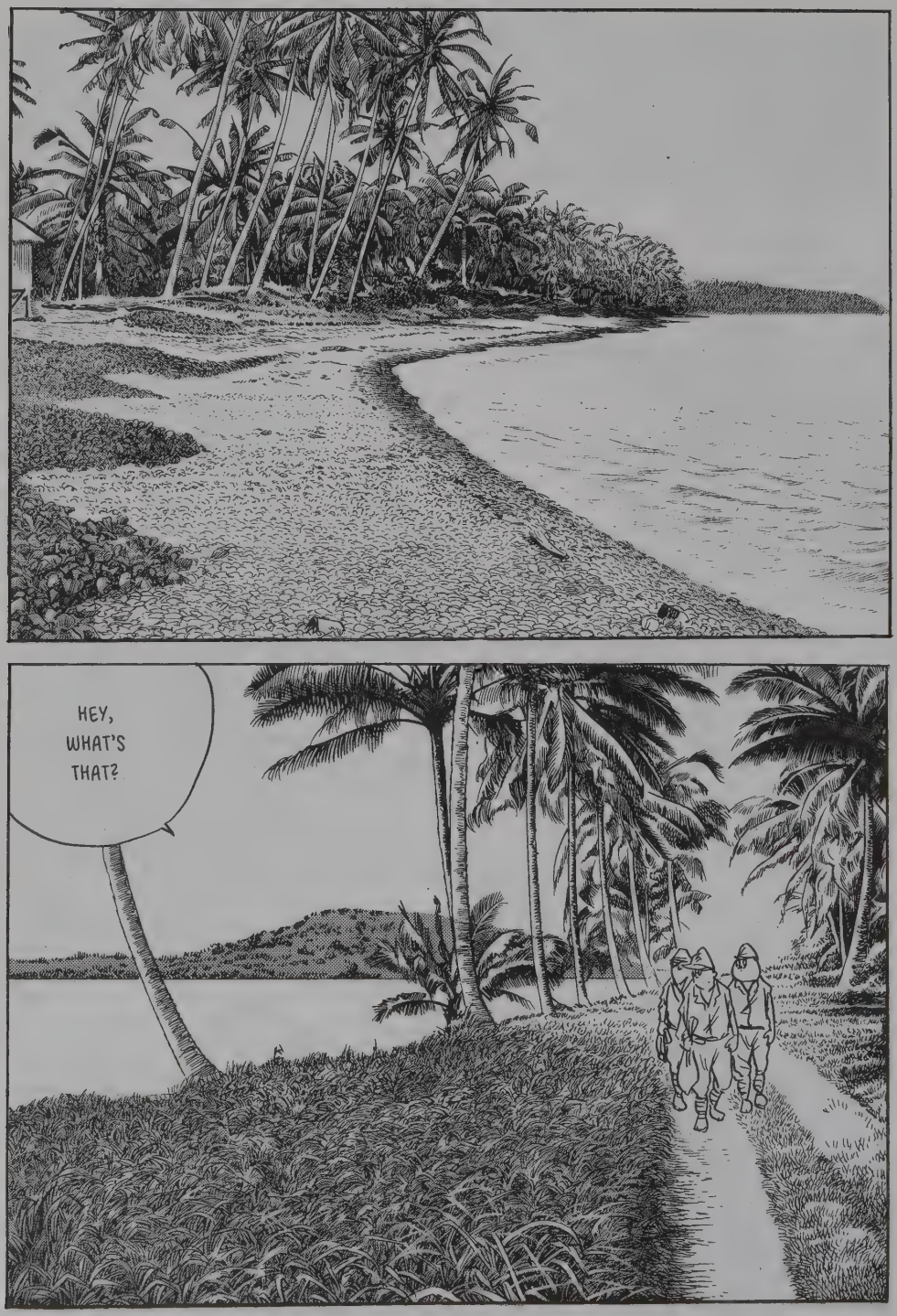


*SEE NOTES ON PAGE 366.

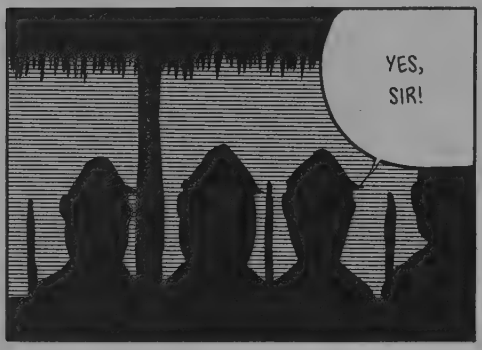

YES, SIR?
HEY, MARUYAMA!
YES, SIR.
BRING THE SERGEANT HIS SUPPER.
THERE'S A PARTY FOR THE OFFICERS AND THE NCOS.
WHY AM I THE ONLY ONE BEING WORKED LIKE A SLAVE ON NEW YEAR'S?

THE MORE YOU LOOK
THE BETTER IT IS
MY DICK
TAKE IT ALL OFF
MY DICK
THE CAPTAIN'S SINGING CRAP LIKE THIS?
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
HERE YOU ARE, SIR.
HEY! SUPPER!


NAPPING IN THE SHADE OF A PALM TREE
AN ALLIGATOR COMES OUT TO GIVE YOU A KISS
MMM.
HOW ABOUT IT, CAPTAIN? YOU NEXT?
CLAP CLAP CLAP
POPPING UP SHOWING IT OFF MY DICK


HEY,
WHAT'S
THAT?

LISTEN UP!


YES, SIR!

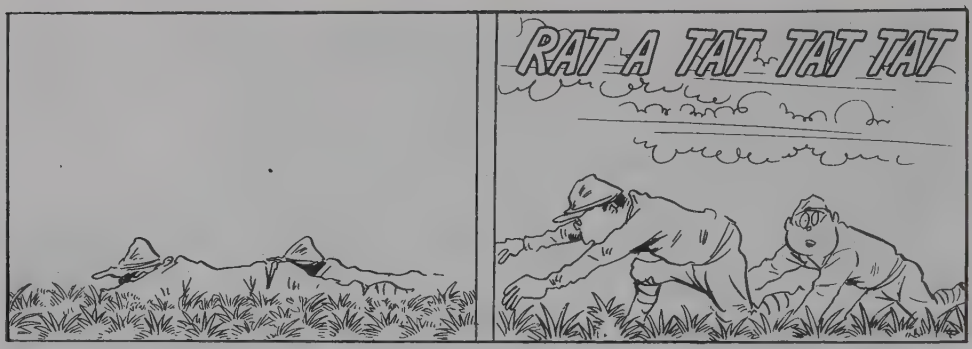
TOMORROW, KIRIMOTO, MARUYAMA, TANAKA, YOU'RE GATHERING VEGETABLES.

WHAT THE— IT'S NEW YEAR'S!

ROOKIES TO THE FRONT!

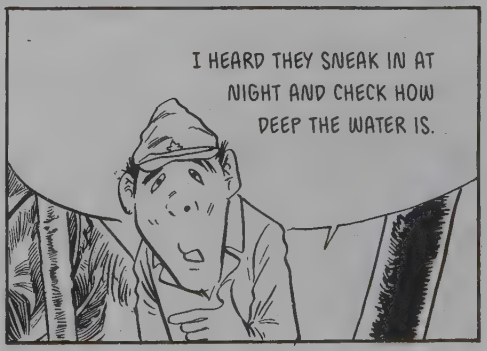
WHAP

WHAAAP

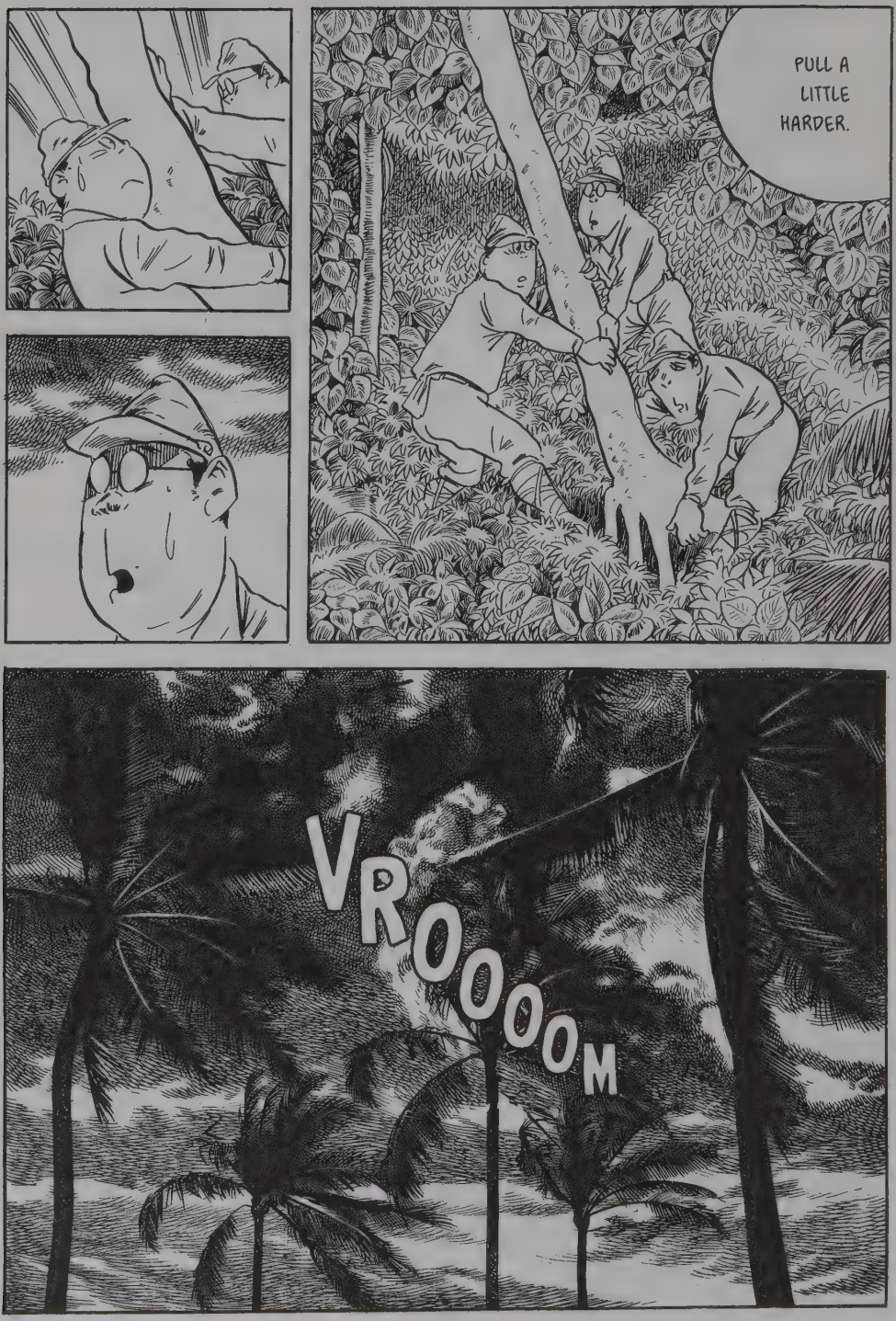

RAT A TAT TAT TAT

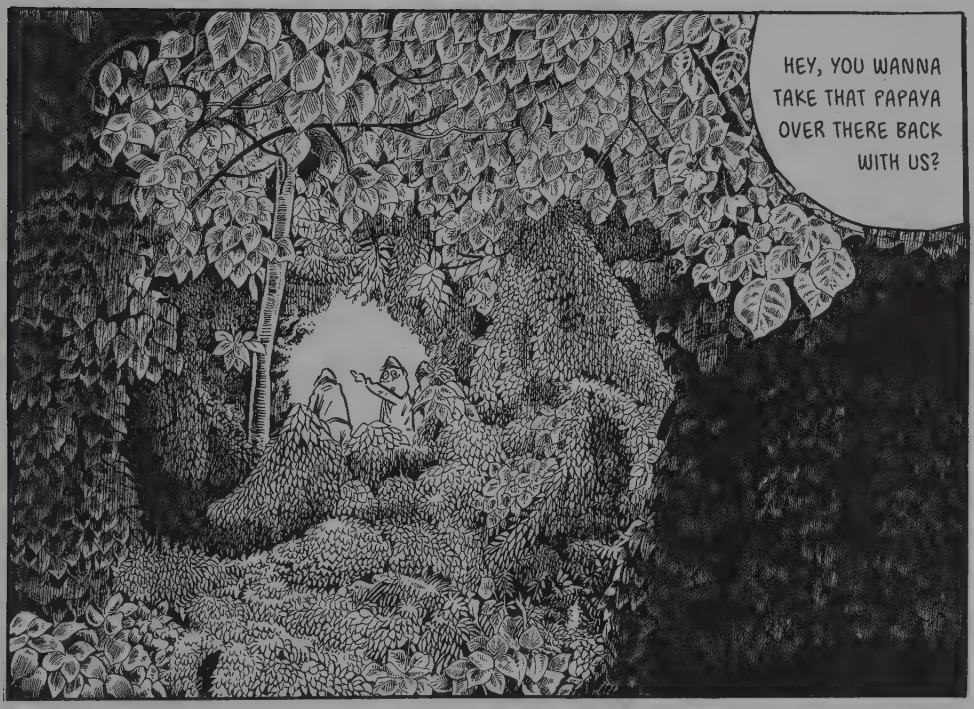
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?!

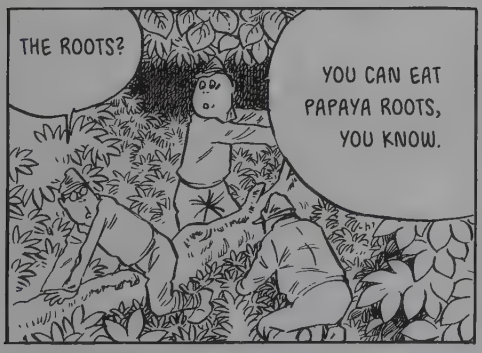
THEM ENEMY SOLDIERS'LL BE COMING ASHORE PRETTY SOON!

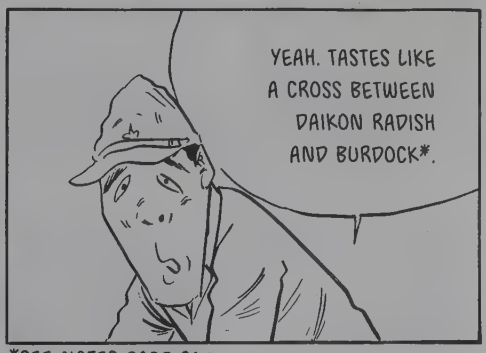

I HEARD THEY SNEAK IN AT NIGHT AND CHECK HOW DEEP THE WATER IS.

IT'S A TORPEDO BOAT.
LOOKS LIKE A SHIP.
RAT A TAT TAT TAT

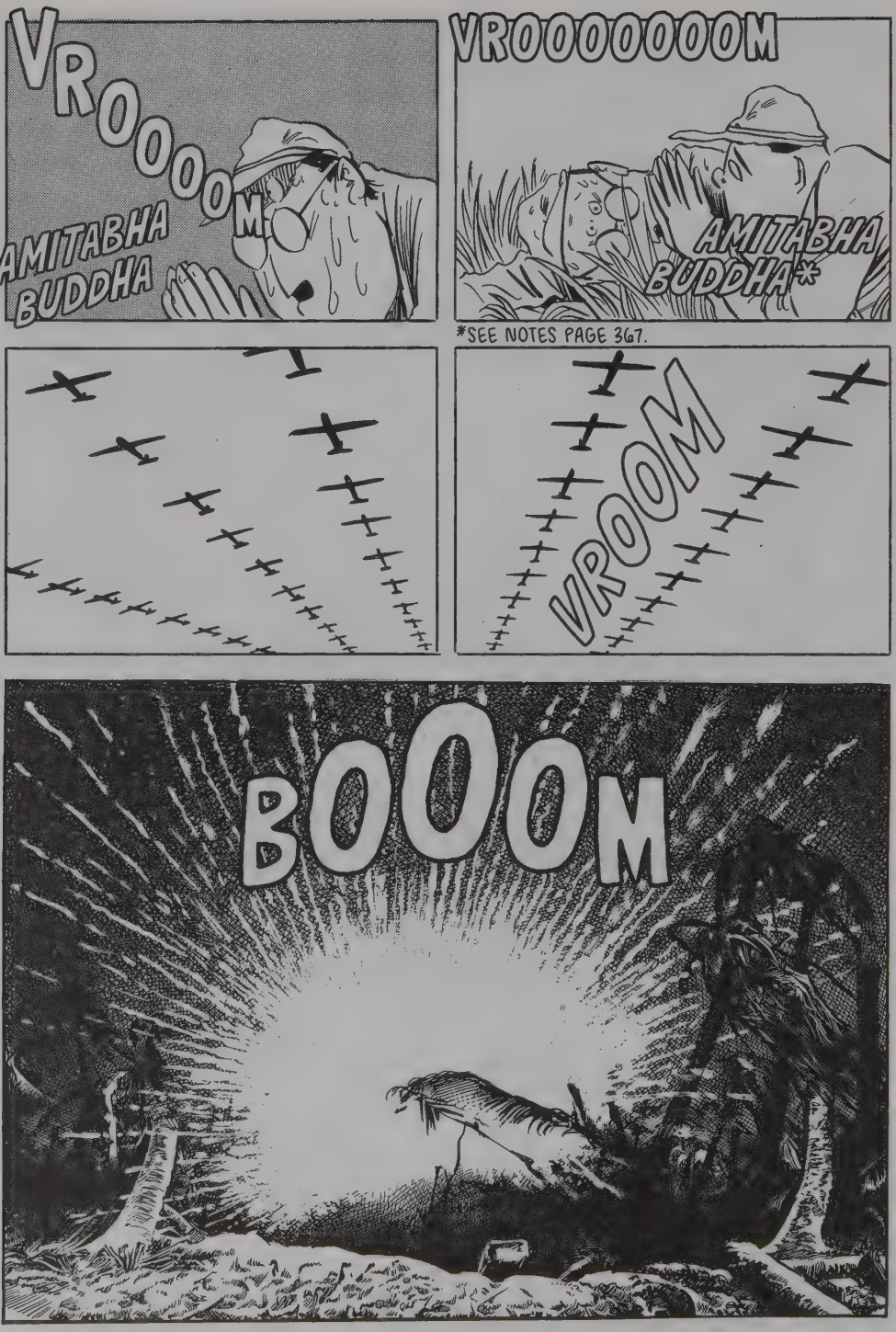

PULL A LITTLE HARDER.
VROOOOOM



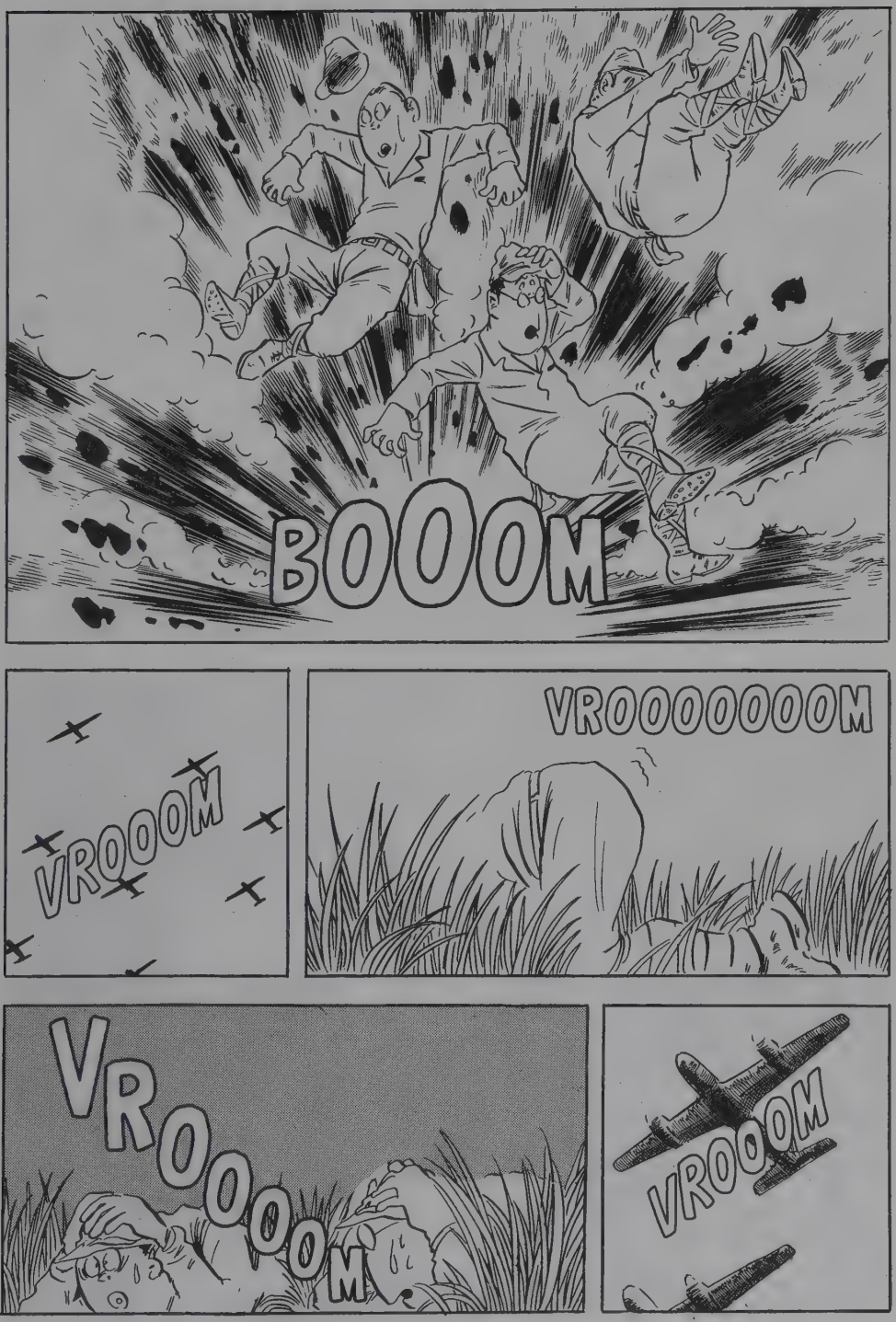




*SEE NOTES PAGE 367.



*SEE NOTES PAGE 367.

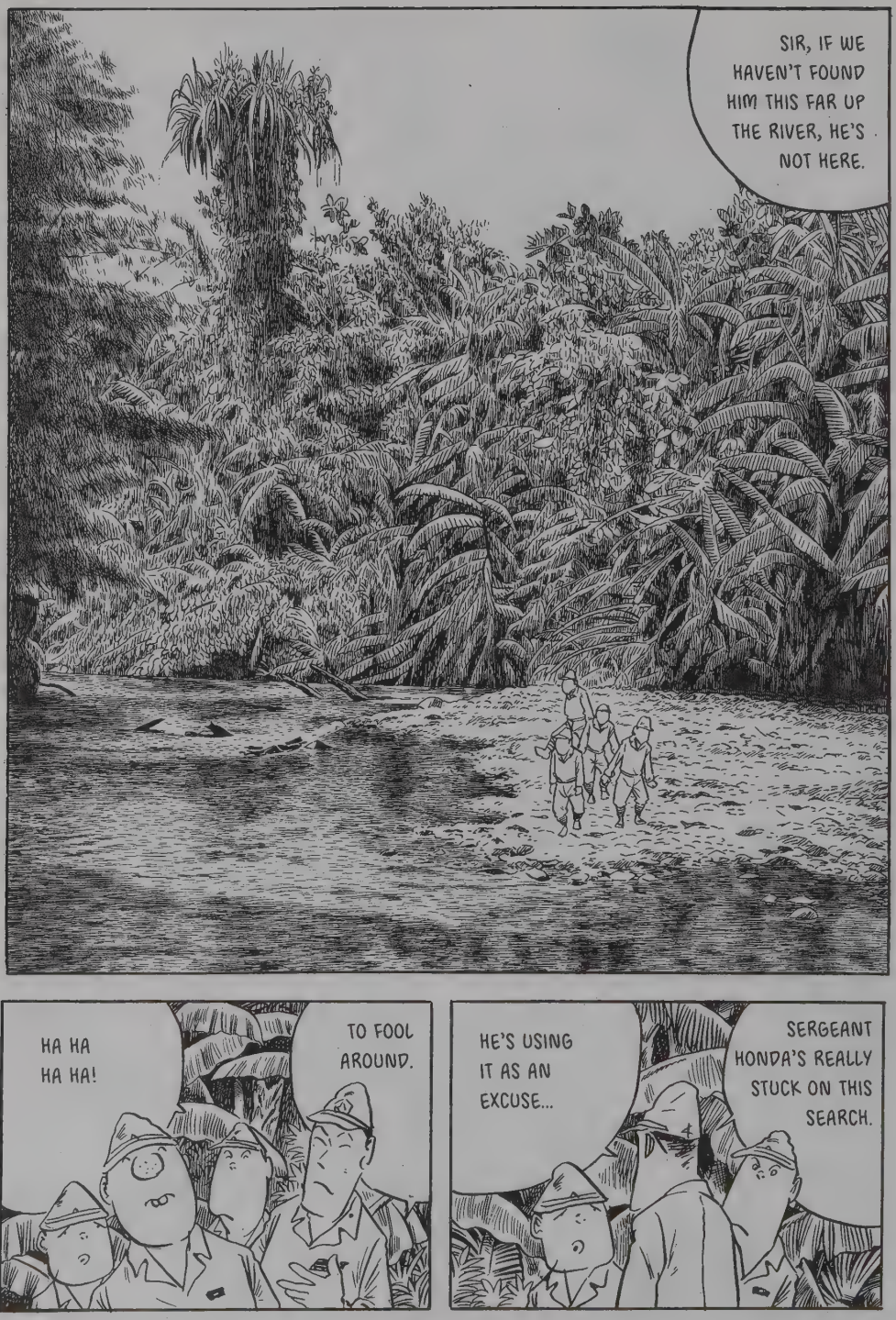

BOOOM
VROOOOM
VROOOOOOOM
VROOOOOM
VROOOM

WHAT THE— NOBODY'S HERE?
THE CORPORAL?
CORPORAL NOGAMI WAS—?
LOOKS LIKE THE CORPORAL WAS EATEN BY A GATOR.
WHERE'D EVERYBODY GO?
YOU IDIOTS!
WHEE HEE HEE HEE
WE'LL BE IN PARADISE NOW, GUYS!
REALLY?

HAAH HA
VROOOOM
YOU SAID IT...
THEY'LL BE BACK SOON ENOUGH.
THEY'RE FINALLY GONE.

YOU'RE PROB'LY RIGHT.
THE CORPORAL'S DEFINITELY IN SOME GATOR'S STOMACH, GETTING DIGESTED AND TURNED INTO CRAP RIGHT NOW.
BUT THE MEN HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR THREE DAYS NOW. ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME TO LET IT GO?
NOGAMI WAS A GOOD MAN. THE LEAST WE CAN DO IS FIND HIS BODY. HIS SPIRIT WILL BE STUCK IF WE DON'T.
NOGAMI WON'T BE ABLE TO REST OTHERWISE.
EVEN IF IT'S JUST A LEG, JUST AN ARM, WE HAVE TO FIND SOMETHING OF HIM!
DON'T SAY THAT, SIR!

GET OUT THERE AND HELP FIND HIM.
HAPPY TO SEE A VET DEAD— WHAT KIND OF ASSHOLES ARE YOU?
SPLOSH
SPLASH
THIRD DAY OF THIS CRAP.

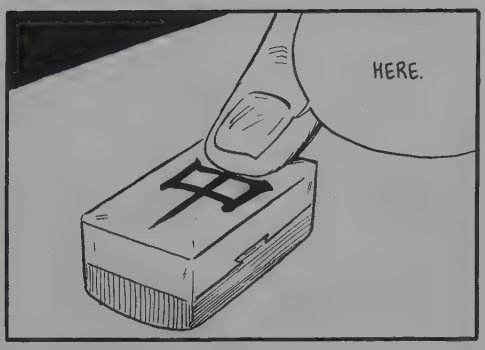

SIR, IF WE HAVEN'T FOUND HIM THIS FAR UP THE RIVER, HE'S NOT HERE.
HA HA HA HA!
TO FOOL AROUND.
HE'S USING IT AS AN EXCUSE...
SERGEANT HONDA'S REALLY STUCK ON THIS SEARCH.

THE CAMP IS THE CAMP; THIS IS ABOUT HUMAN DIGNITY.
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE CAMP CONSTRUCTION?
HMM... WELL, THIS IS A PROBLEM.
NO MATTER WHAT, I HAVE TO HELP NOGAMI REST IN PEACE.
THREE DAYS PASSED AND THEN FOUR, AND STILL THE BODY OF CORPORAL NOGAMI WAS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND.

I WOULD NEVER HAVE THOUGHT I WOULD END UP PLAYING MAHJONG AT THE FRONT.
WE ALL KNEW YOU WERE HIDING SOMETHING.
UH, YES.
YOU'RE SHOOTING FOR THE RED DRAGON, AREN'T YOU?

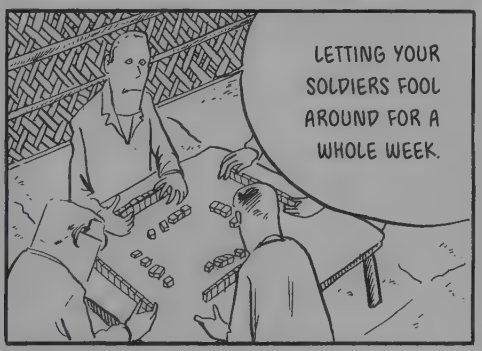
WE SURE HAVE IT EASY NOW.
THINKING BACK TO OUR DAYS AT THE CAMP...
IT'S BEEN ALMOST A WEEK.
LIEUTENANT HOMU!
MIZUMOTO, YOU WANT TO PLAY MAHJONG?
WE'RE SHORT ONE MAN.
PERFECT. THEN COME ALONG TO THE POLICE HQ.
I'D BE DELIGHTED TO JOIN YOU, SIR.

HOW ABOUT YOU QUIT FOOLING AROUND WITH THIS CORPSE BUSINESS?
THANK YOU, SIR.
I'LL LET IT GO THIS TIME.
YES, SIR.
SO THEY'RE WATCHING ME...

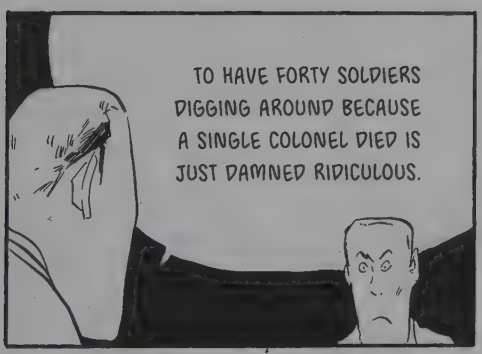

HERE.

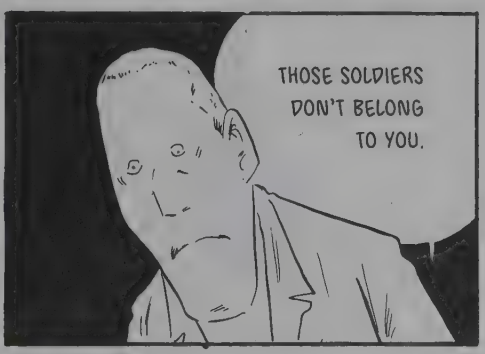
HESITATING WILL GET YOU KILLED IN THIS PLACE.

YOU GONNA TAKE IT? YOU NEED IT, DON'T YOU?

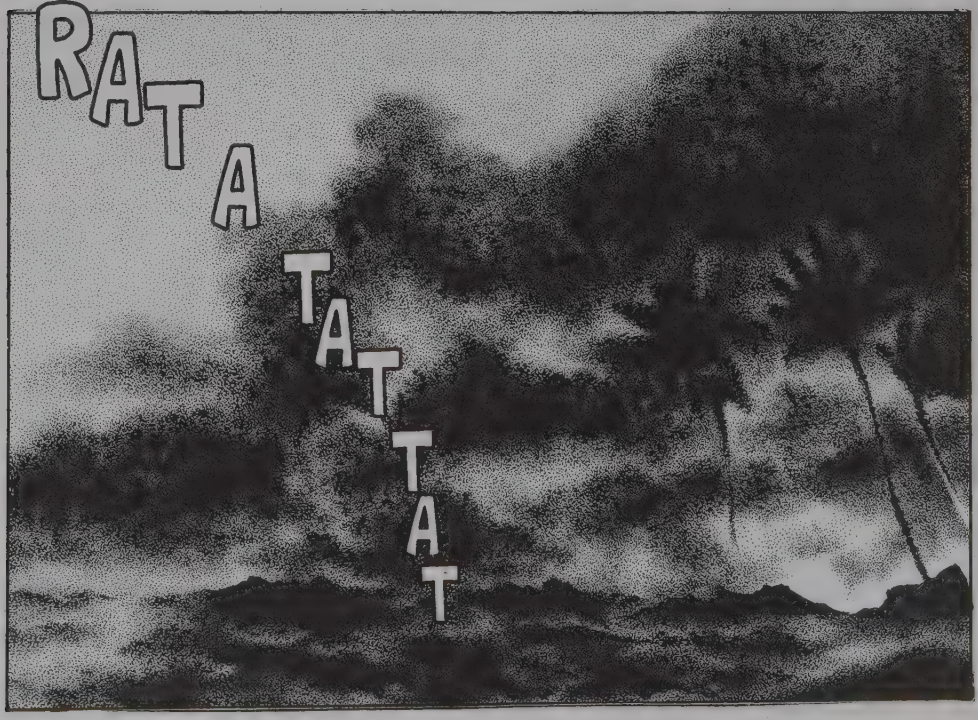

LETTING YOUR SOLDIERS FOOL AROUND FOR A WHOLE WEEK.

!! ?


TO HAVE FORTY SOLDIERS DIGGING AROUND BECAUSE A SINGLE COLONEL DIED IS JUST DAMNED RIDICULOUS.


THOSE SOLDIERS DON'T BELONG TO YOU.

RAT A TAT TAT TAT

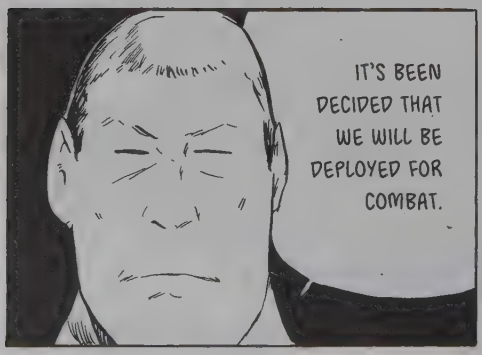

RA T A TA T T A T

THE ENEMY ARRIVES

OFFICERS, ASSEMBLE AT HQ!

A GROUP OF ENEMY TRANSPORT SHIPS IS HEADED THIS WAY.

ACCORDING TO THE REPORTS WE'VE JUST RECEIVED...


IT'S BEEN DECIDED THAT WE WILL BE DEPLOYED FOR COMBAT.

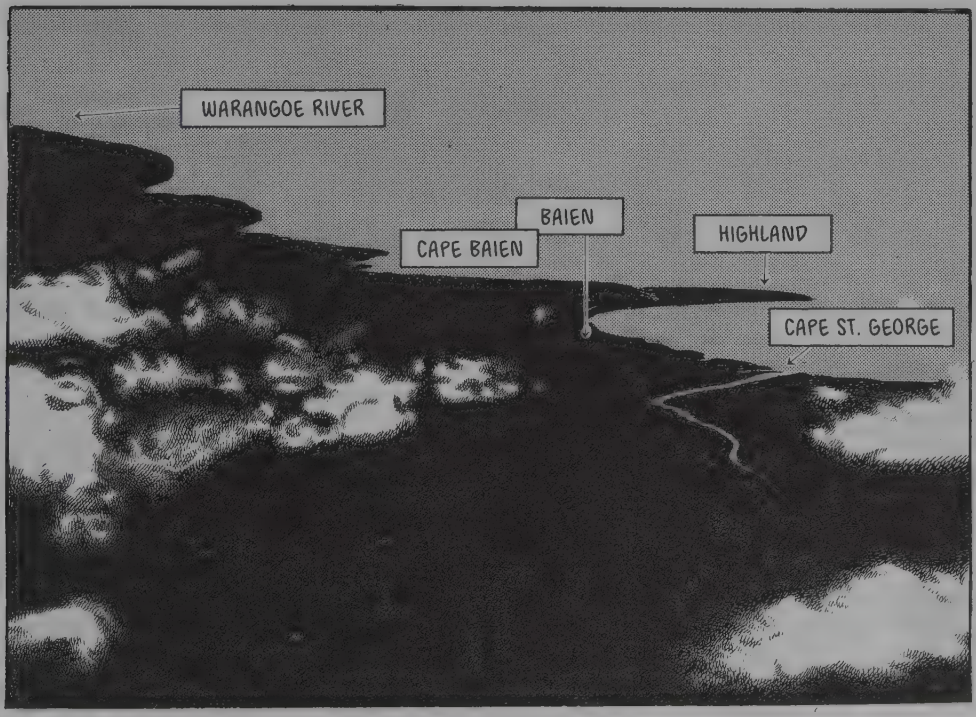
AFTER DISCUSSION WITH LIEUTENANT -COLONEL TADOKORO...

THE ENEMY TURNED
THE CAMP ON THE
MOUNTAIN INTO
A WASTELAND.

THUD
HUP!
YES, SIR.
THREE GRENADES EACH.
ONCE YOU GOT 'EM, GET INTO POSITION.
WHAT'RE YOU DAWDLING FOR?!

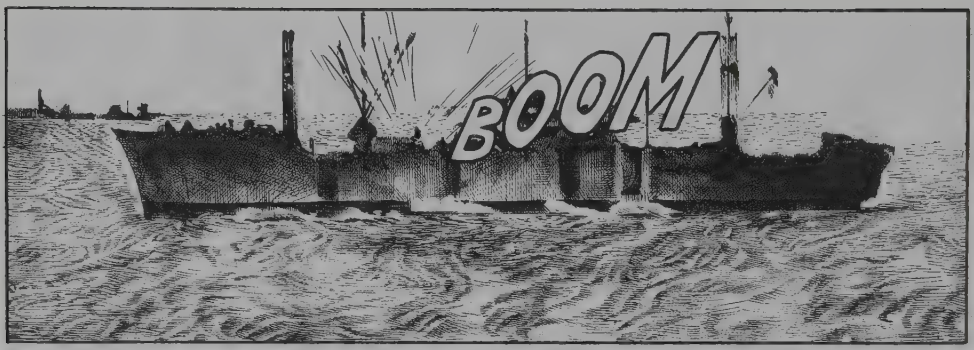
YES, SIR.
THE FIRST SECTION WILL SET UP AT THE MOUTH OF THE WARANGOE RIVER.

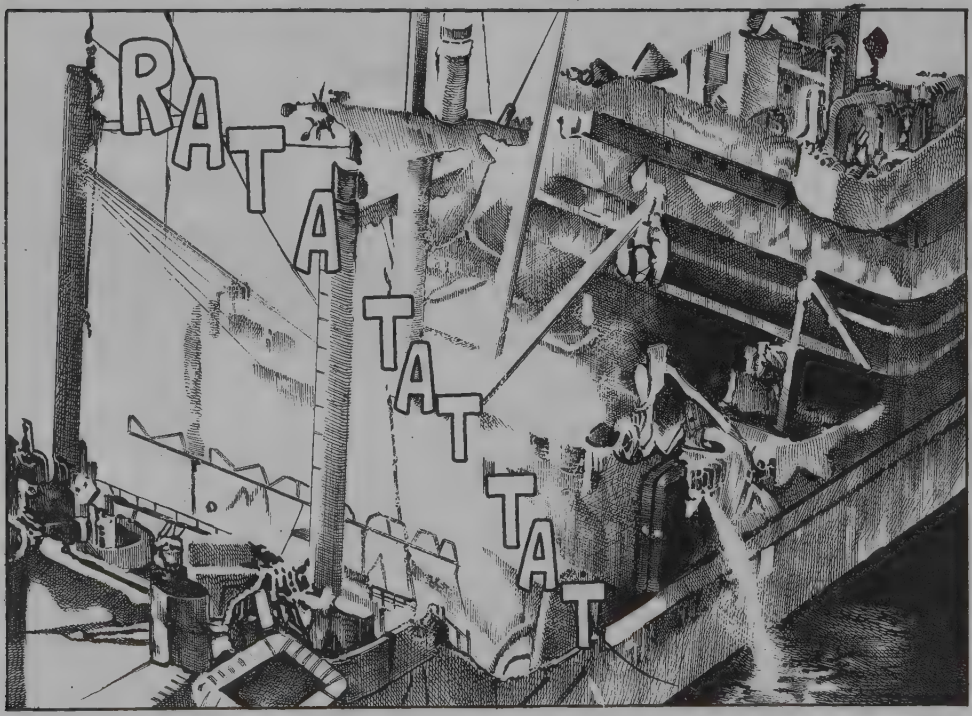
THE SECOND AND THIRD SECTIONS WILL TAKE THE MOUNTAIN BASE.


WARANGOE RIVER
CAPE BAIEN
BAIEN
HIGHLAND
CAPE ST. GEORGE

ARE THEY COMING OR NOT?
THEY'RE HERE!

I NEED TO TAKE A SHIT.
HURRY UP THEN.
I NEED TO TAKE A LEAK.
IDIOTS! JUST GET IN THE DAMNED HOLE!


BOOM


RATATATATAT

BANZAI!

GOT 'EM!

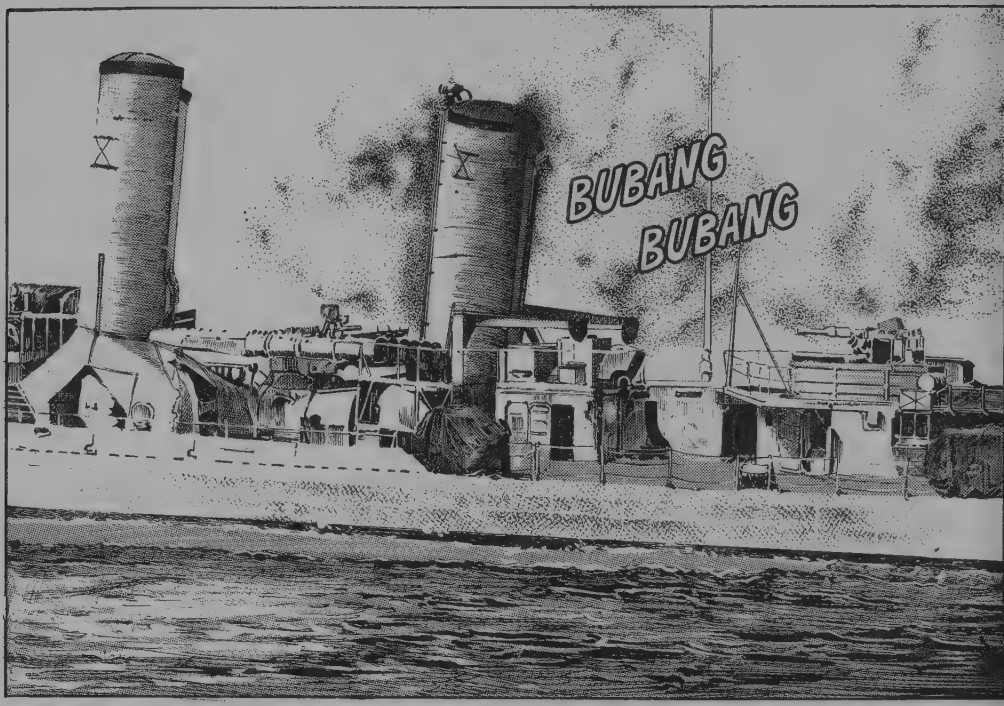
KKKABOOM

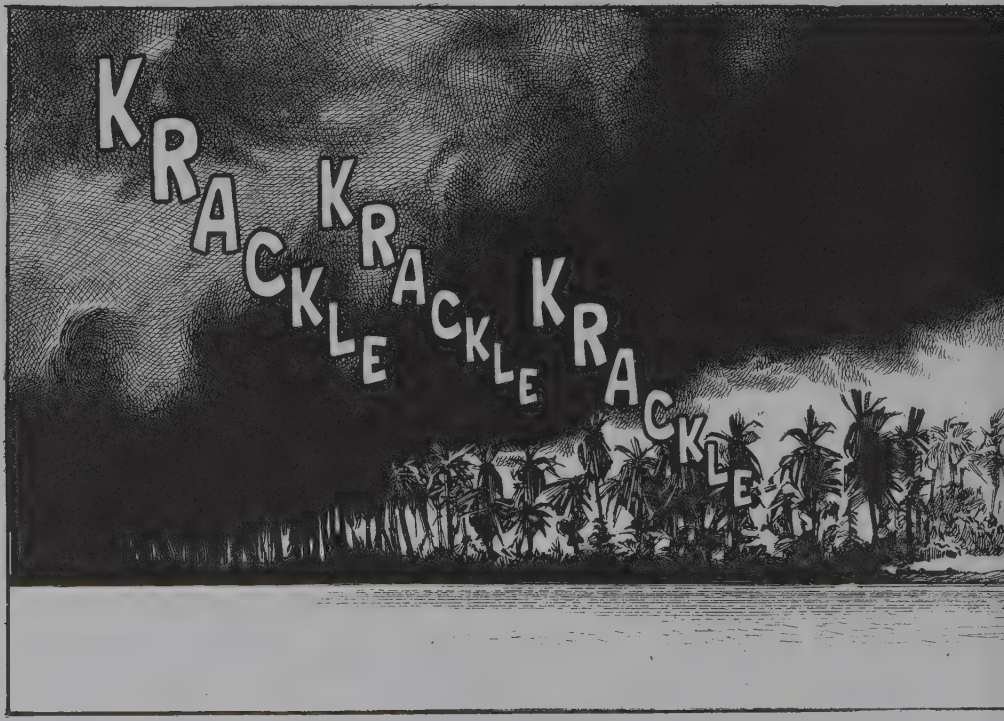
OKAY!

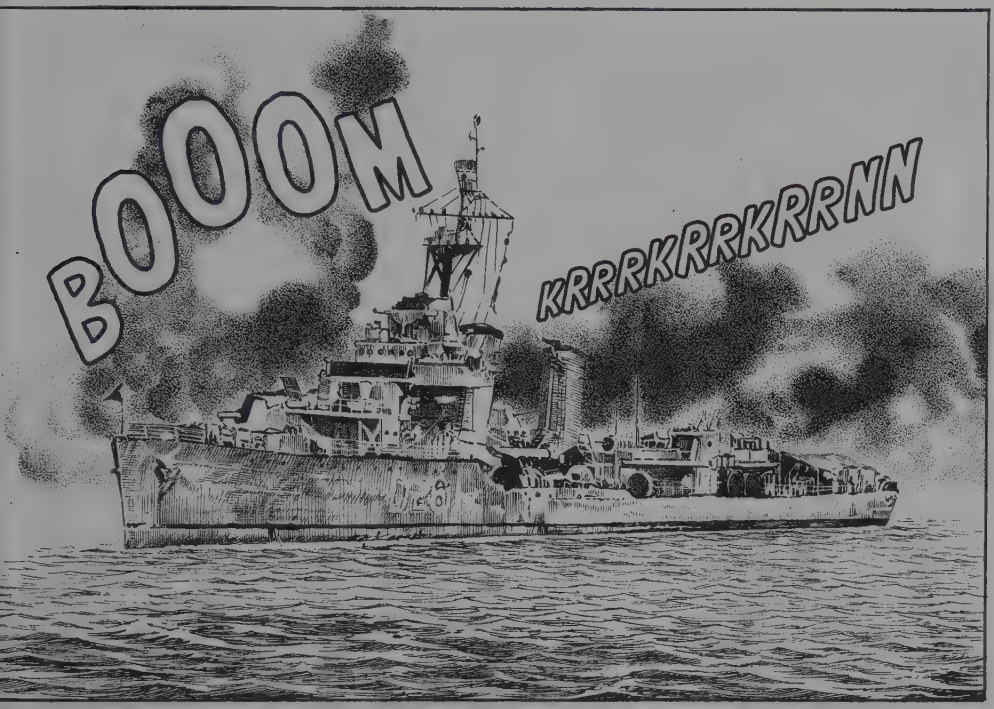
FIRE THE CANON!

BOOM
WAS IT BRAVE TO FIRE? RECKLESS? SILENCE REIGNED AFTER THE BATTALION'S SINGLE CANNON SHOT.

AND HERE WE GO.
INCOMING!
VROOOOM
RAT A TAT TAT TAT


BUBANG
BUBANG

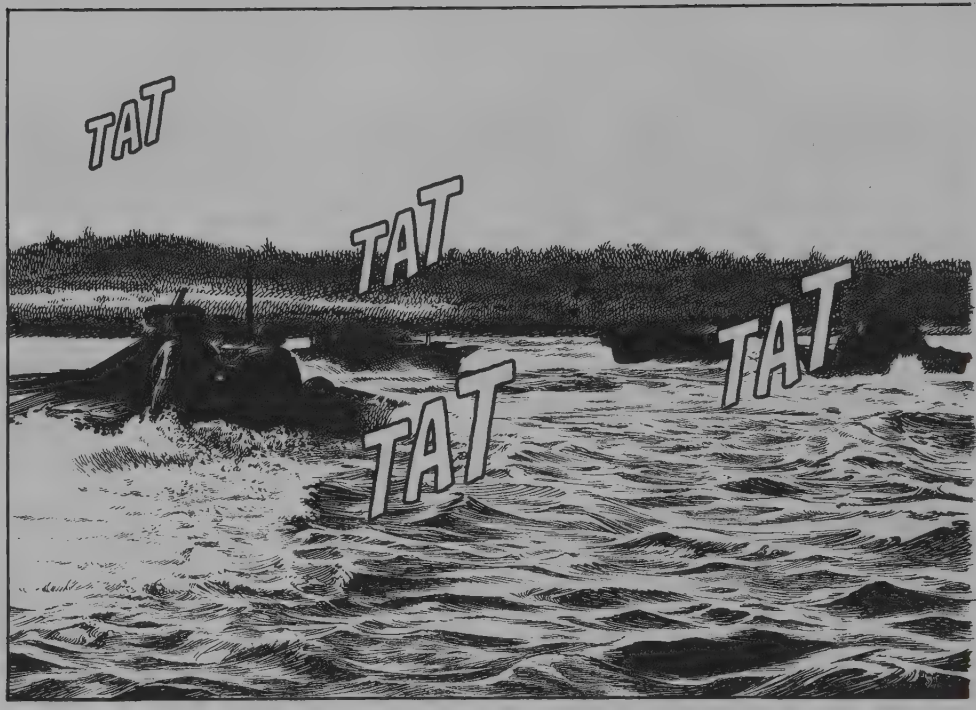

KRACKLE
KRACKLE
KRACKLE


BOOOM
KRRRKRRKRRNN

KRACKLE KRACKLE

WHOOSH

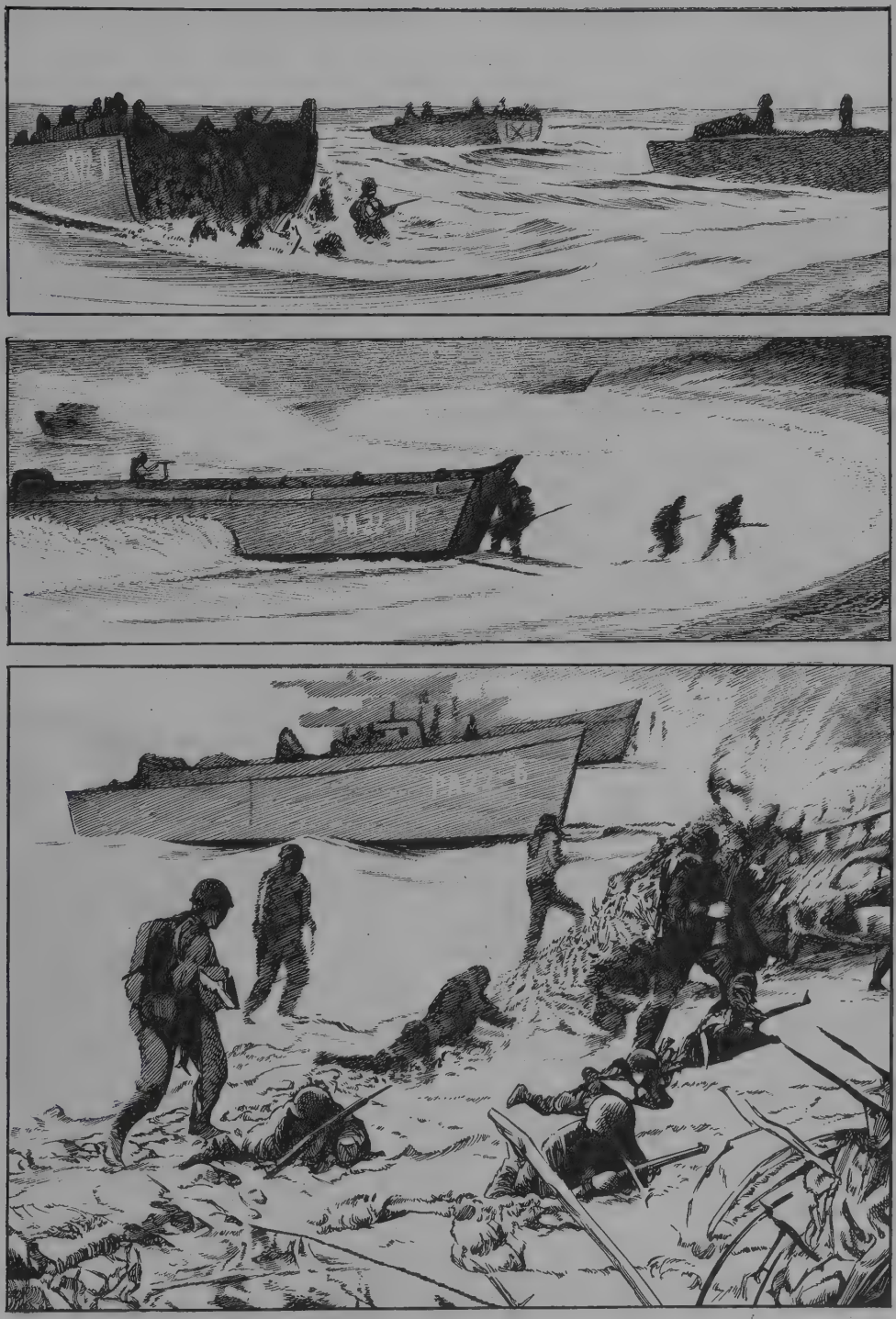
LANDING
BEGINS!


TAT
TAT
TAT
TAT

TAT
TAT
TAT
TAT

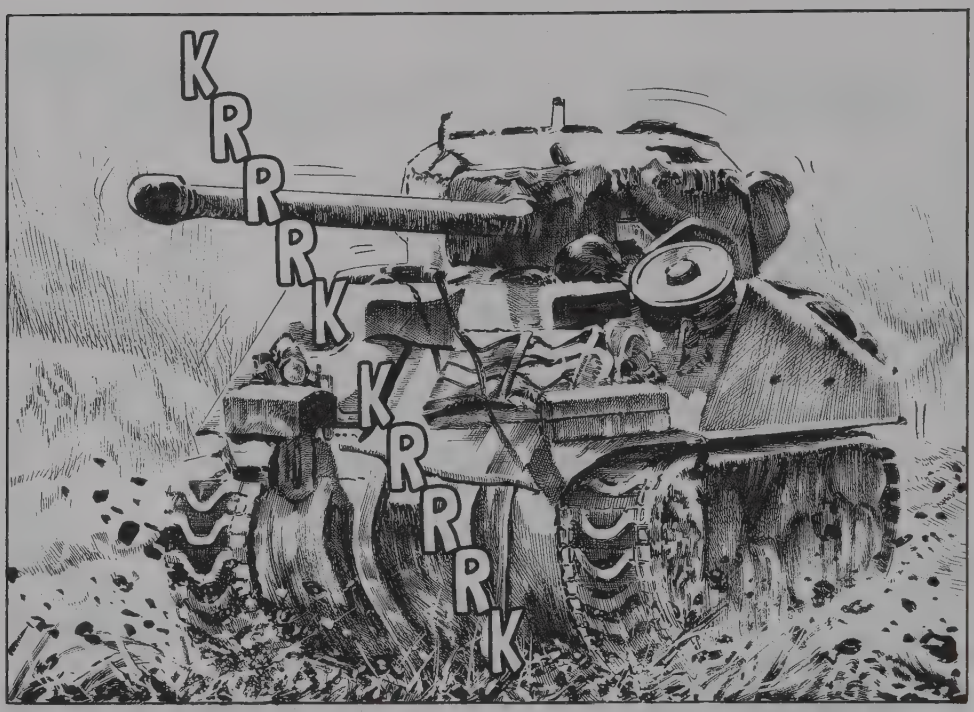
BLAM

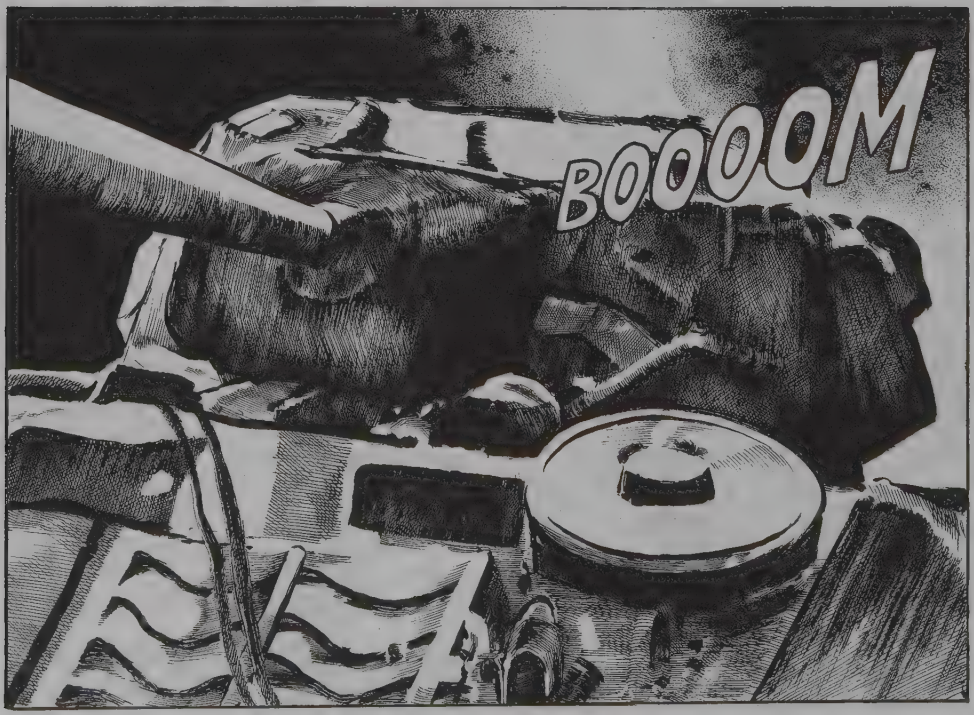
BOOM
GUYS, THEY SENT KONISHI FLYING!

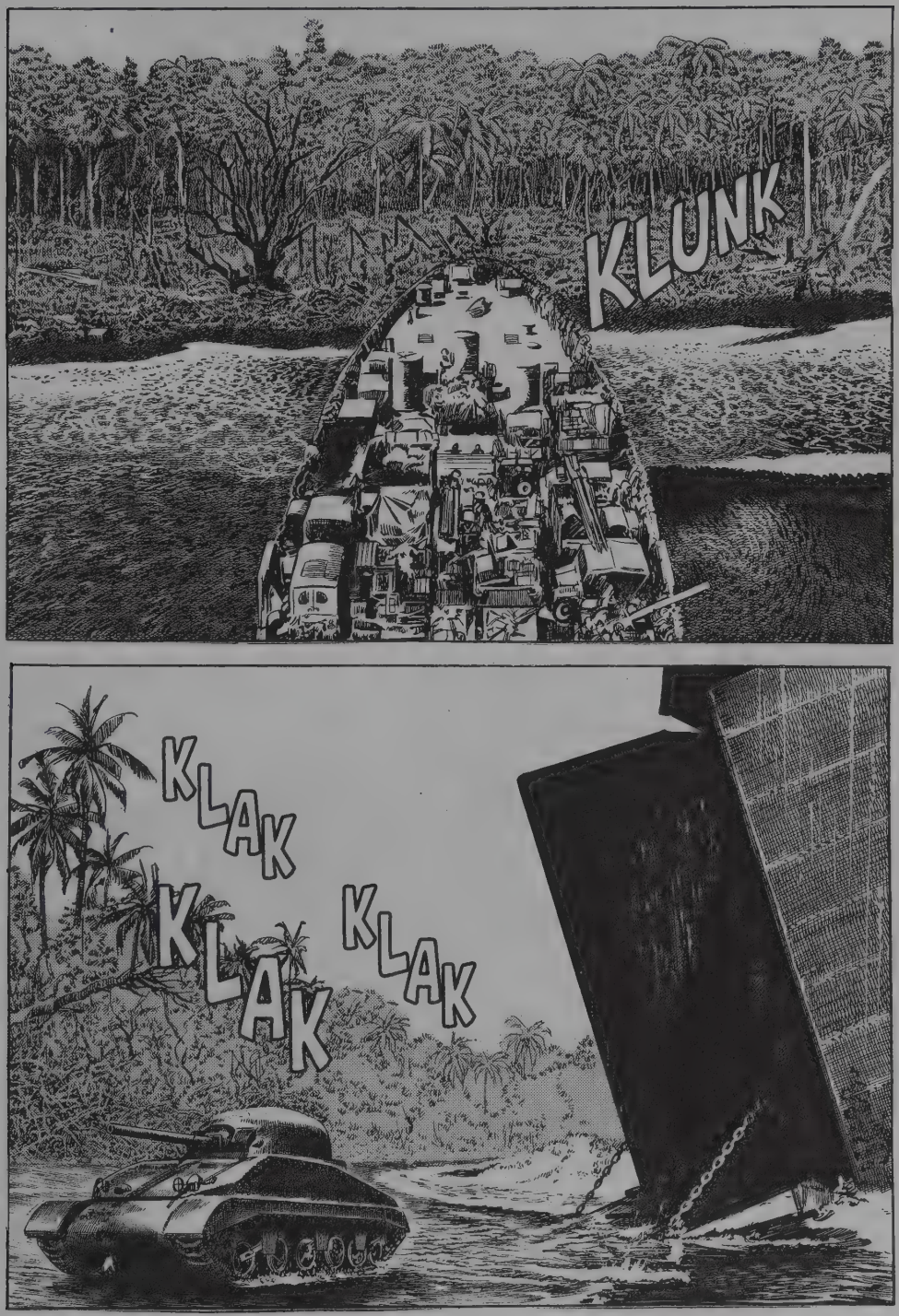


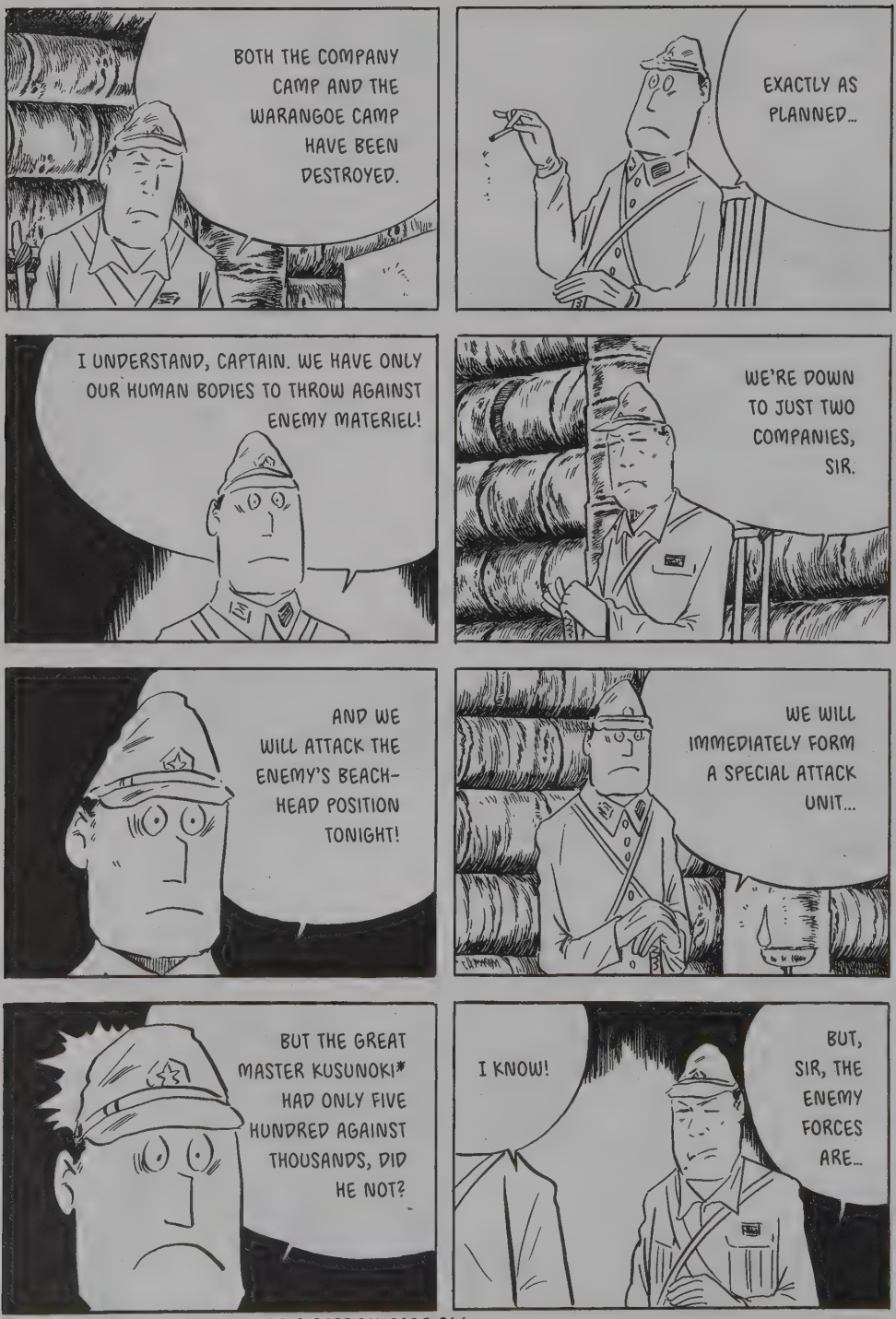
DID THEY?
AH!
WHAT?!
THERE'S A HUGE SHIP COMING RIGHT AT US!
THERE IT IS!
KRRR
KRRR

TAKING A LEAK.
WHAT WAS KONISHI DOING, SIR?
KADUNK
THUNK
TAT
TAT
TAT
I'M THINKING THEY SET UP GUNS AT THE MOUTH OF THE WARANGOE.
NO, IT'S NOT THAT.
THE SHIP'S GUNS?


KRRRRKKRRRRK


BOOOOM

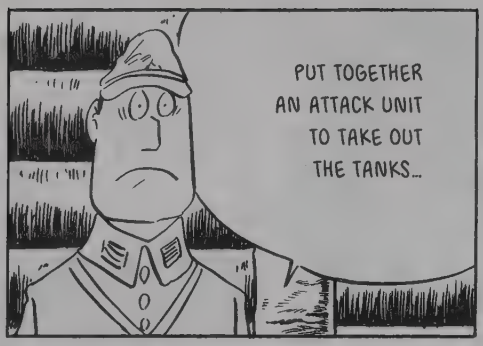

KLUNK
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK


BOTH THE COMPANY CAMP AND THE WARANGOE CAMP HAVE BEEN DESTROYED.
EXACTLY AS PLANNED...
I UNDERSTAND, CAPTAIN. WE HAVE ONLY OUR HUMAN BODIES TO THROW AGAINST ENEMY MATERIEL!
WE'RE DOWN TO JUST TWO COMPANIES, SIR.
AND WE WILL ATTACK THE ENEMY'S BEACH-HEAD POSITION TONIGHT!
WE WILL IMMEDIATELY FORM A SPECIAL ATTACK UNIT...
BUT THE GREAT MASTER KUSUNOKI* HAD ONLY FIVE HUNDRED AGAINST THOUSANDS, DID HE NOT?
I KNOW!
BUT, SIR, THE ENEMY FORCES ARE...

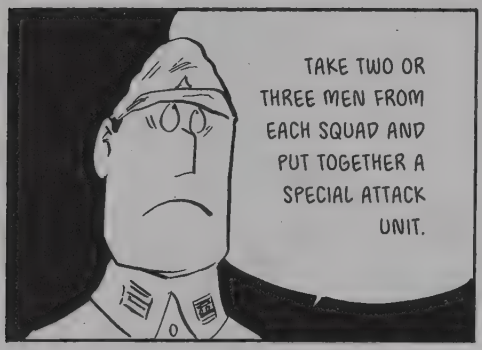
*SEE NOTES FOR PAGE 29 IN NOTES SECTION PAGE 366.

SPECIAL ATTACK UNIT

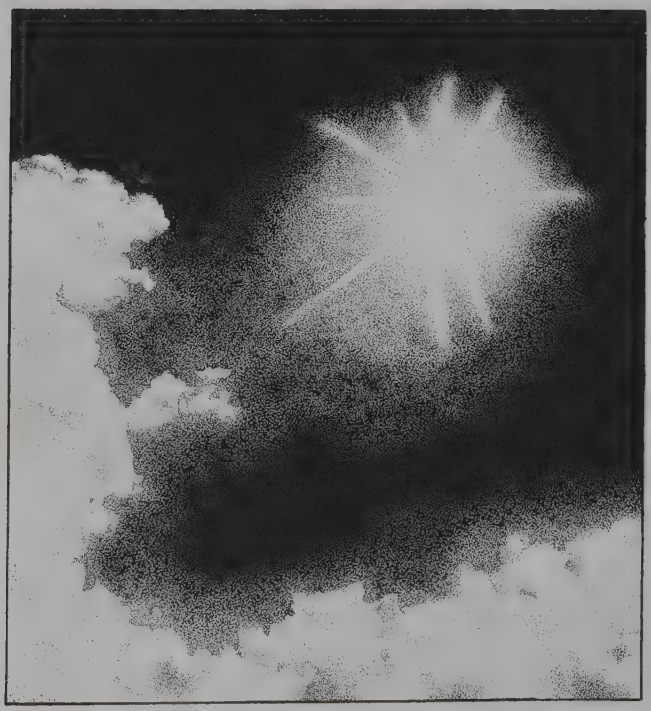
LIEUTENANT-COLONEL TADOKORO!
THE ENEMY.
WHAT IS IT, CAPTAIN?
THEY HAVE A TANK HEADED STRAIGHT FOR MY COMPANY.
THEY STORMED THE BEACHHEAD AND TOOK THE WARANGOE.


PUT TOGETHER AN ATTACK UNIT TO TAKE OUT THE TANKS...

YES, SIR.
I SEE— LIEUTENANT!


TAKE TWO OR THREE MEN FROM EACH SQUAD AND PUT TOGETHER A SPECIAL ATTACK UNIT.

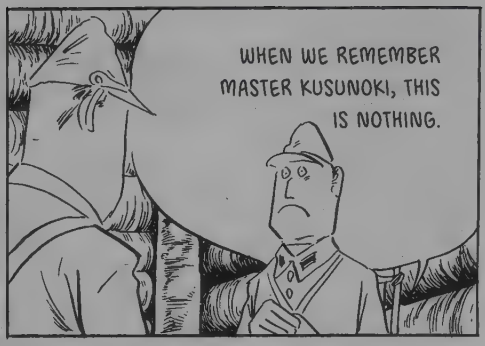
YES, SIR.
AT THE ENEMY'S BEACHHEAD BASE.



CARRY THE ATTACKS OUT TONIGHT.

THIS IS THE ONLY PATH LEFT FOR US.

IF WE FIGHT WITH EVERY OUNCE OF OUR STRENGTH, WE WILL BE ABLE TO HOLD FOR A FEW DAYS.


WHEN WE REMEMBER MASTER KUSUNOKI, THIS IS NOTHING.

DO NOT SPEAK TO ME OF RETREAT!
MOVE TO HIGHER GROUND AND ENGAGE IN GUERILLA TACTICS, WE CAN HOLD FOR A YEAR, MAYBE TWO.

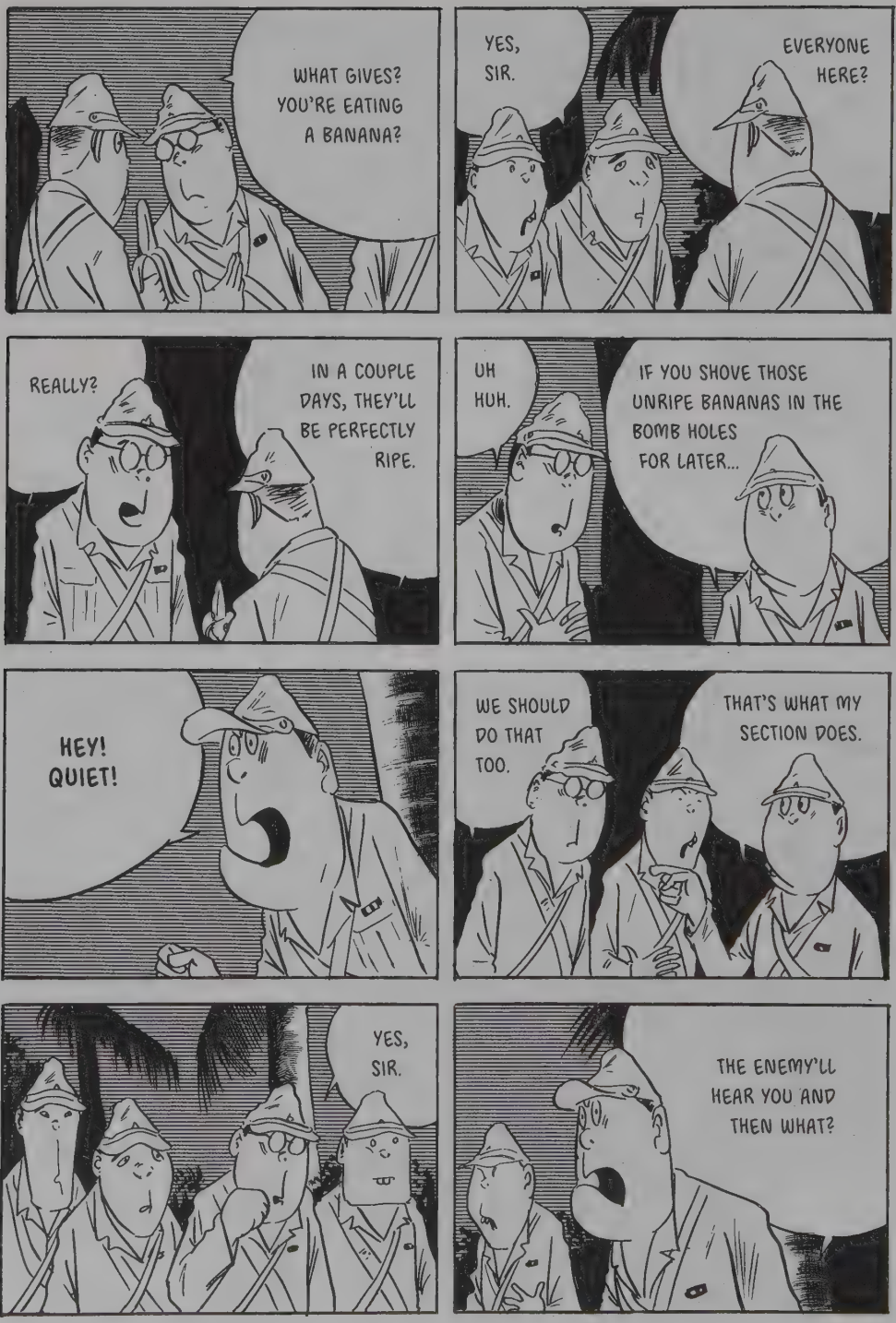
IF WE RETREAT TEMPORARILY...
A FEW DAYS?

BAM BAM BAM BAM

FOOLISHNESS!

WHAT?! OUR HEAVY ARTILLERY HAS BEEN DESTROYED?!

SIR, I HAVE A MESSAGE!


WHAT GIVES? YOU'RE EATING A BANANA?
YES, SIR.
EVERYONE HERE?
REALLY?
IN A COUPLE DAYS, THEY'LL BE PERFECTLY RIPE.
UH HUH.
IF YOU SHOVE THOSE UNRIPE BANANAS IN THE BOMB HOLES FOR LATER...
HEY! QUIET!
WE SHOULD DO THAT TOO.
THAT'S WHAT MY SECTION DOES.
YES, SIR.
THE ENEMY'LL HEAR YOU AND THEN WHAT?

TWO MEN FROM EACH SECTION COME AND GET IT!
HEY! WE'RE GIVING OUT THE LAST OF THE GRUB!
YES, SIR.
AND NO DILLY-DALLYING!
ROOKIES, YOU GO!
I'M PRETTY SICK OF IT.
YOU SAID IT.
IT'S BEEN OVER A YEAR AND STILL, IT'S 'ROOKIES THIS,' 'ROOKIES THAT.' RIGHT, AKASAKI?

IT'S TOO QUIET.
I CAN'T GO ANY FARTHER.
REALLY?
SEEMS LIKE JUST ONE REGIMENT CAME ASHORE.
LET'S TAKE A BREAK.

YES, SIR.
TAKE THE RICE BACK TO YOUR SQUADS.
ONE MAN, ONE BAG.
KREEE
KREEE
I DON'T KNOW WHEN THE NEXT SUPPLY DROP WILL BE.
SO MAKE THIS LAST.

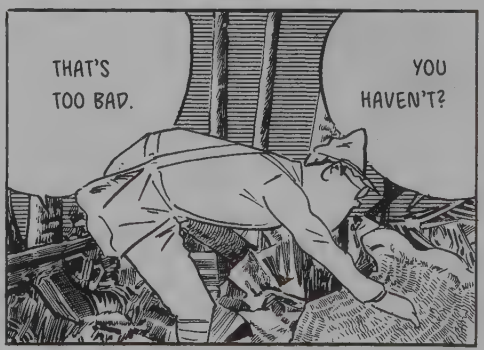
YOU'RE LUCKY, NOT BEING A VIRGIN AND ALL.
EVER SINCE THEN, HUH?

SHALL WE GO TOGETHER?

I'VE NEVER PUT IT IN A WOMAN.
I CAME BEFORE I EVEN GOT IT IN HER.

LIKE HELL! I GOT TOGETHER WITH THE WOMAN AT THE STATION RESTAURANT, BUT...

JUST IN CASE I DIE AND YOU MANAGE TO LIVE—

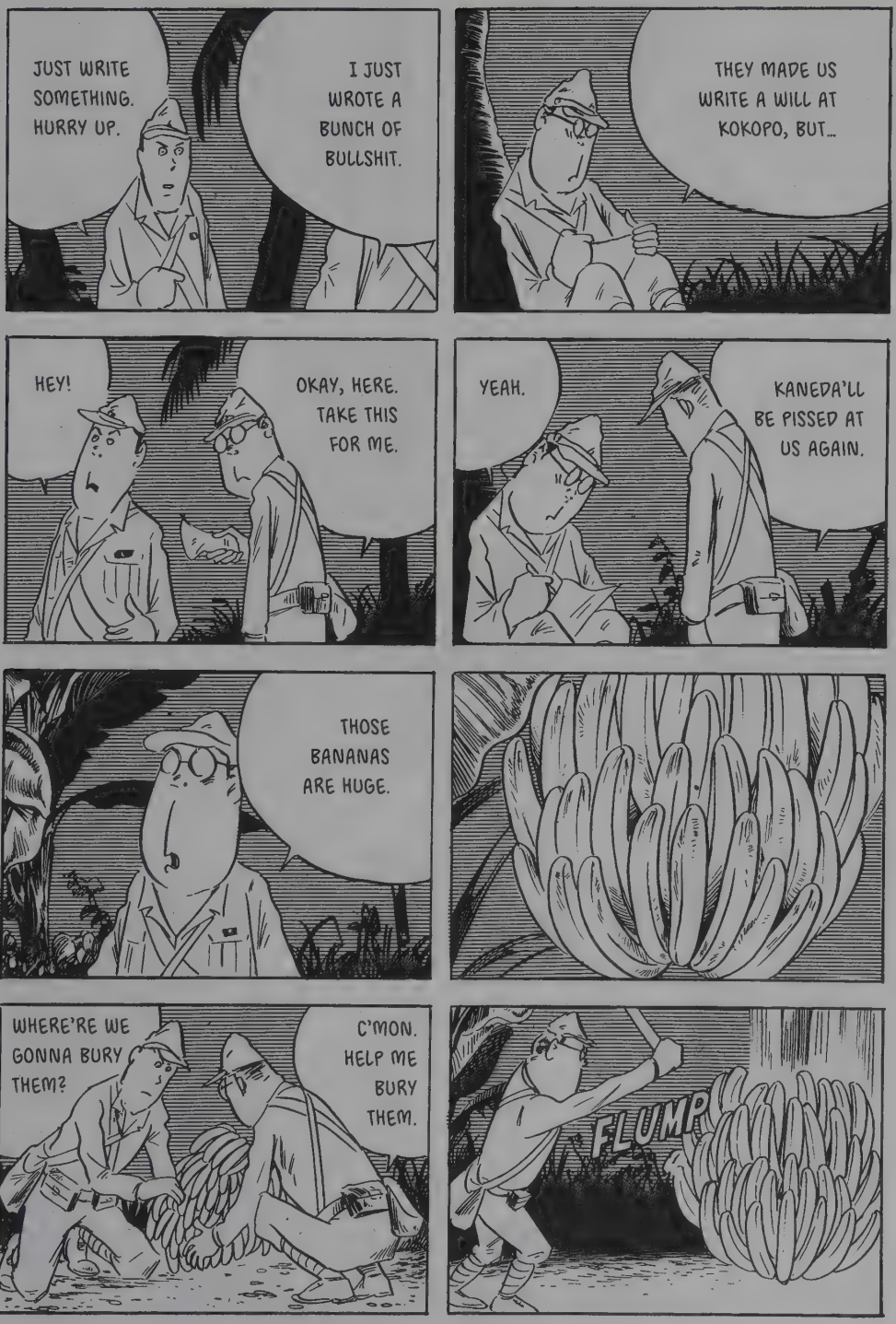

THAT'S TOO BAD.
YOU HAVEN'T?

OK, ME TOO.

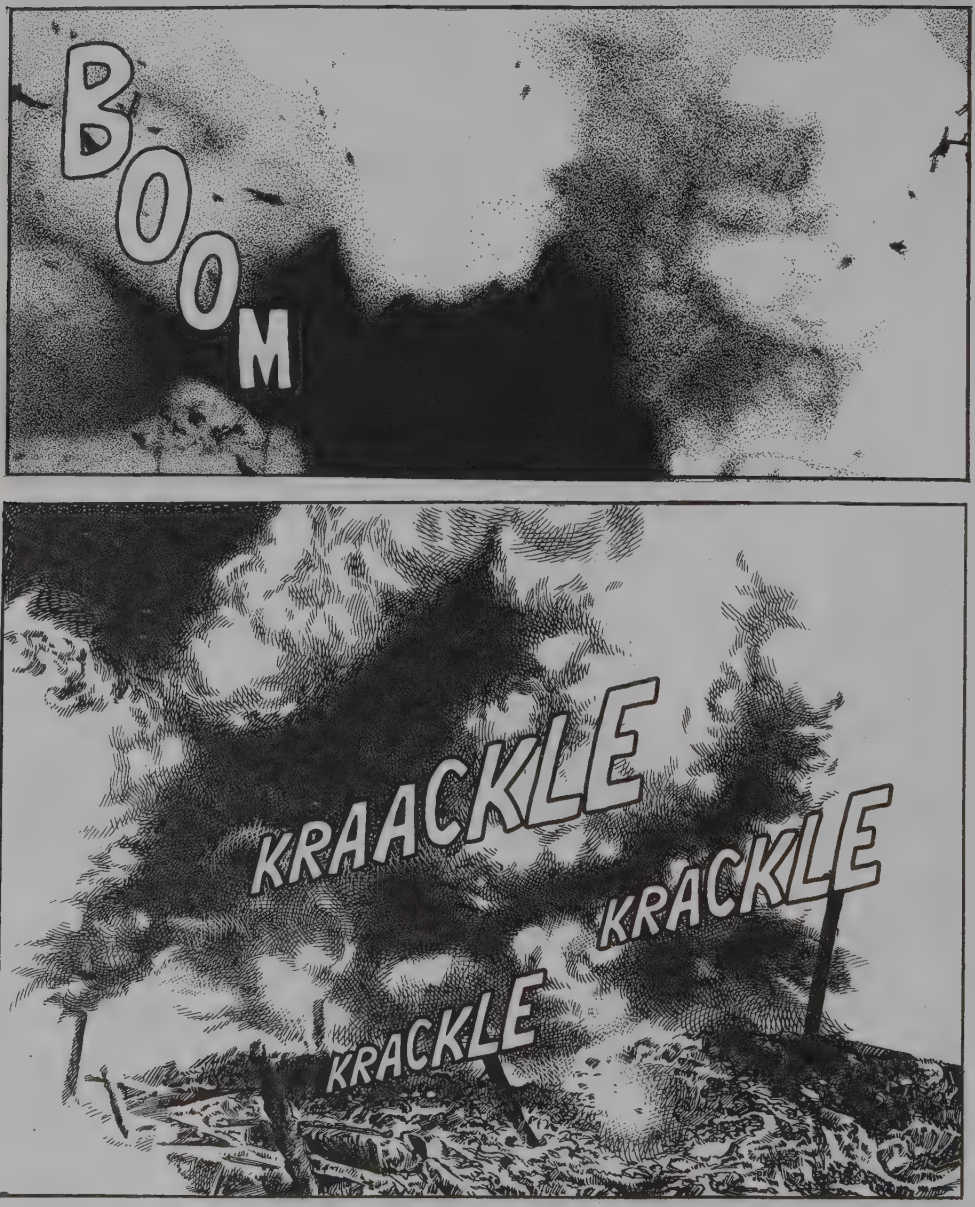
YOU'RE REALLY PREPARED, HUH?
HERE, TAKE THIS.

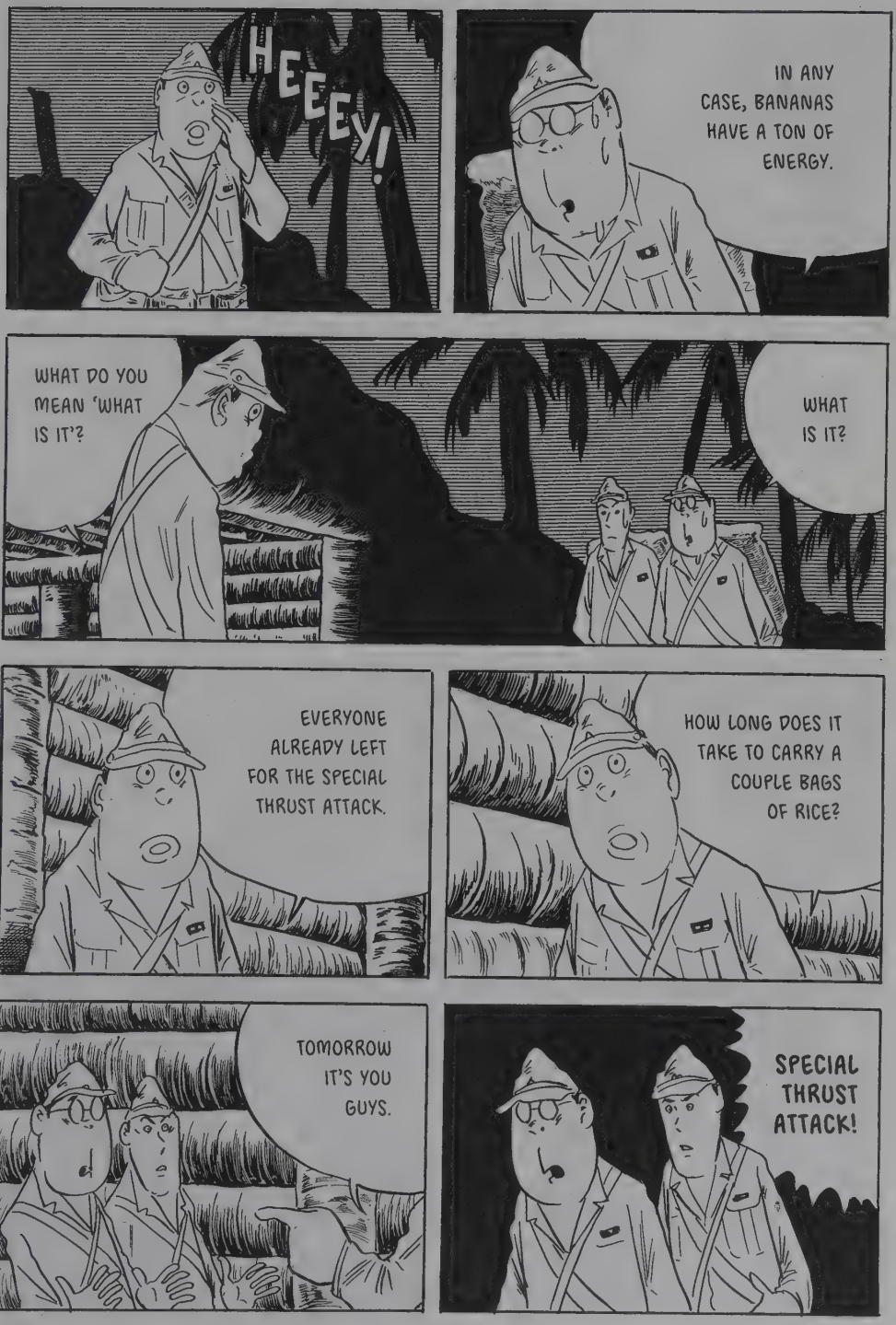
OH YEAH.
REMEMBER HOW WE MET BEFORE WE EVEN JOINED UP?
KLAKETTA
KLAKETTA
I THOUGHT SO.
YES, I AM.
UM, EXCUSE ME—ARE YOU ALSO JOINING UP?

FWOOP
IN-IN THAT BOMB HOLE.
YOU REALLY MOVE WHEN BANANAS ARE INVOLVED.
YEAH, KEEP SOME OTHER SECTION FROM EATING THEM.
COVER IT WITH SOME LEAVES.
WELL, I HEARD THAT A SINGLE BANANA CAN GIVE YOU ENOUGH CALORIES TO WORK A WHOLE DAY.

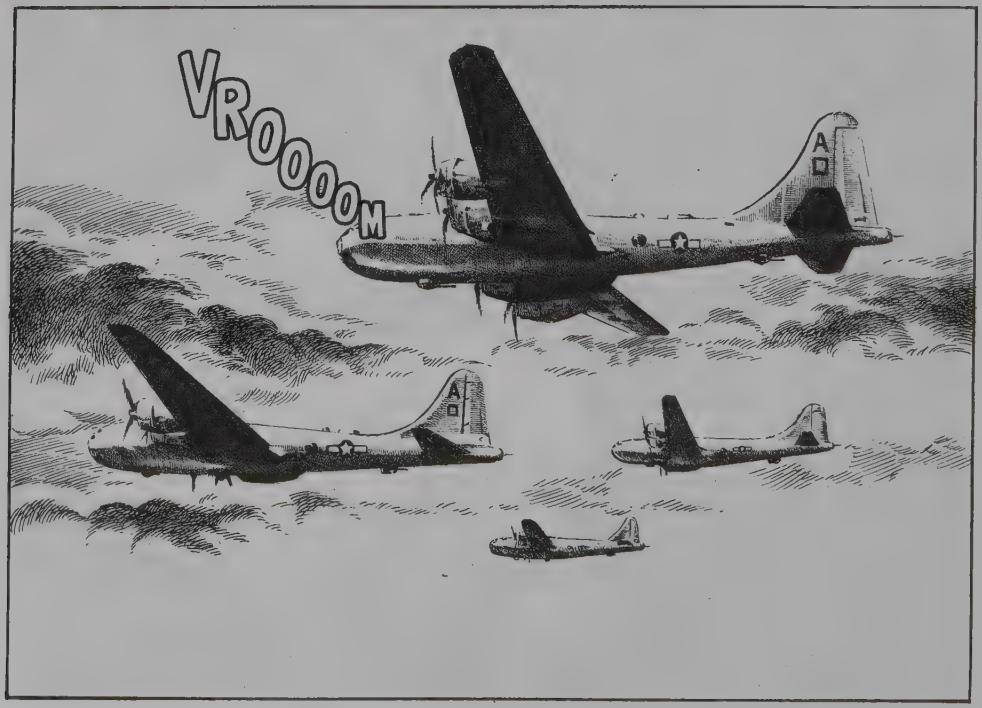

JUST WRITE SOMETHING. HURRY UP.
I JUST WROTE A BUNCH OF BULLSHIT.
THEY MADE US WRITE A WILL AT KOKOPO, BUT...
HEY!
OKAY, HERE. TAKE THIS FOR ME.
YEAH.
KANEDA'LL BE PISSED AT US AGAIN.
THOSE BANANAS ARE HUGE.
WHERE'RE WE GONNA BURY THEM?
C'MON. HELP ME BURY THEM.
FLUMP

HQ'S NEAR DESTRUCTION



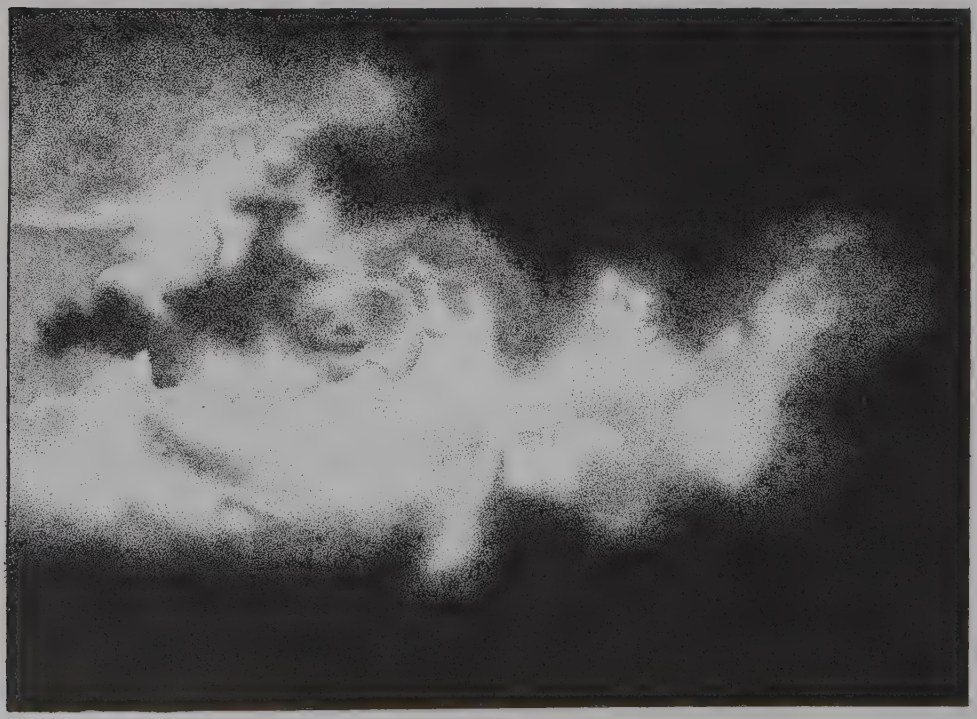

HEEEY!
IN ANY CASE, BANANAS HAVE A TON OF ENERGY.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN 'WHAT IS IT'?
WHAT IS IT?
EVERYONE ALREADY LEFT FOR THE SPECIAL THRUST ATTACK.
HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO CARRY A COUPLE BAGS OF RICE?
TOMORROW IT'S YOU GUYS.
SPECIAL THRUST ATTACK!

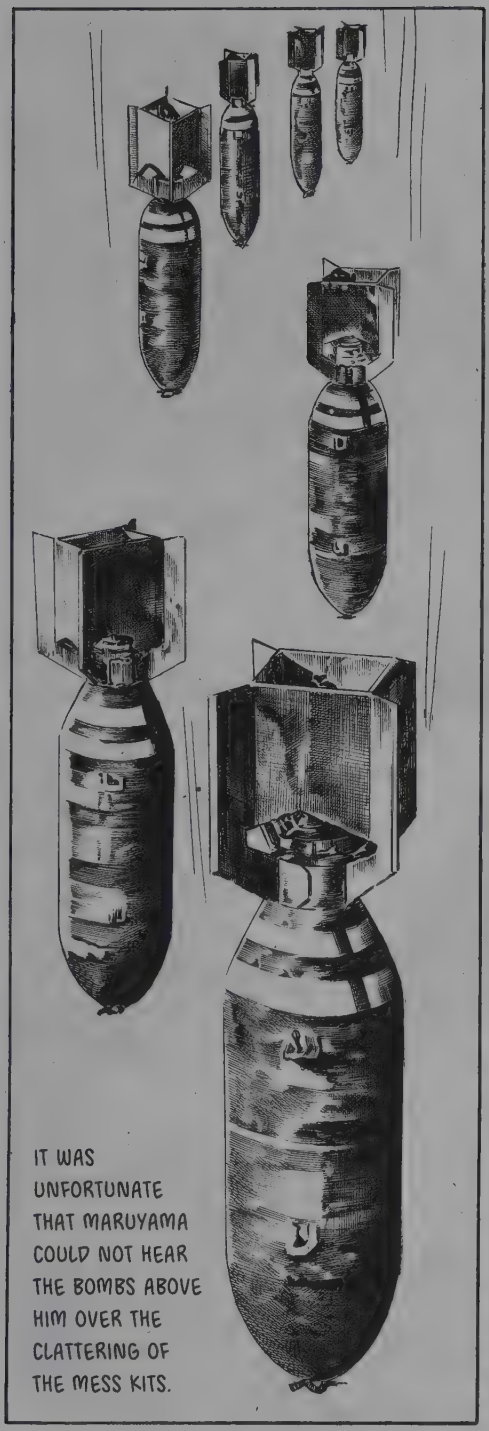
CLATTER
CLATTER
CLATTER

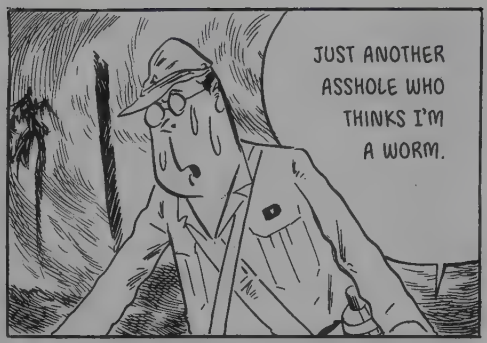

VROOOOM

I'M PART OF TONIGHT'S SPECIAL ATTACK UNIT.
BUT, SIR...
HEY, YOU! GO GET SOME WATER!
IDIOT!
BUT IT'S RAINING BOMBS...
WHEN I TELL YOU TO GO, YOU GO!
I'LL GO AND FETCH THE WATER, SIR.
WHAAAP
WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A WAR. DON'T QUIBBLE WITH ME!
THIS SUCKS EGGS.

BOOM
RAT A TAT TAT

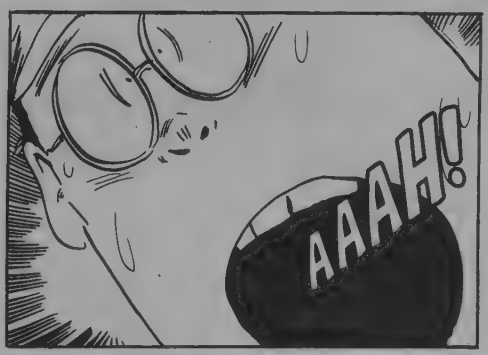


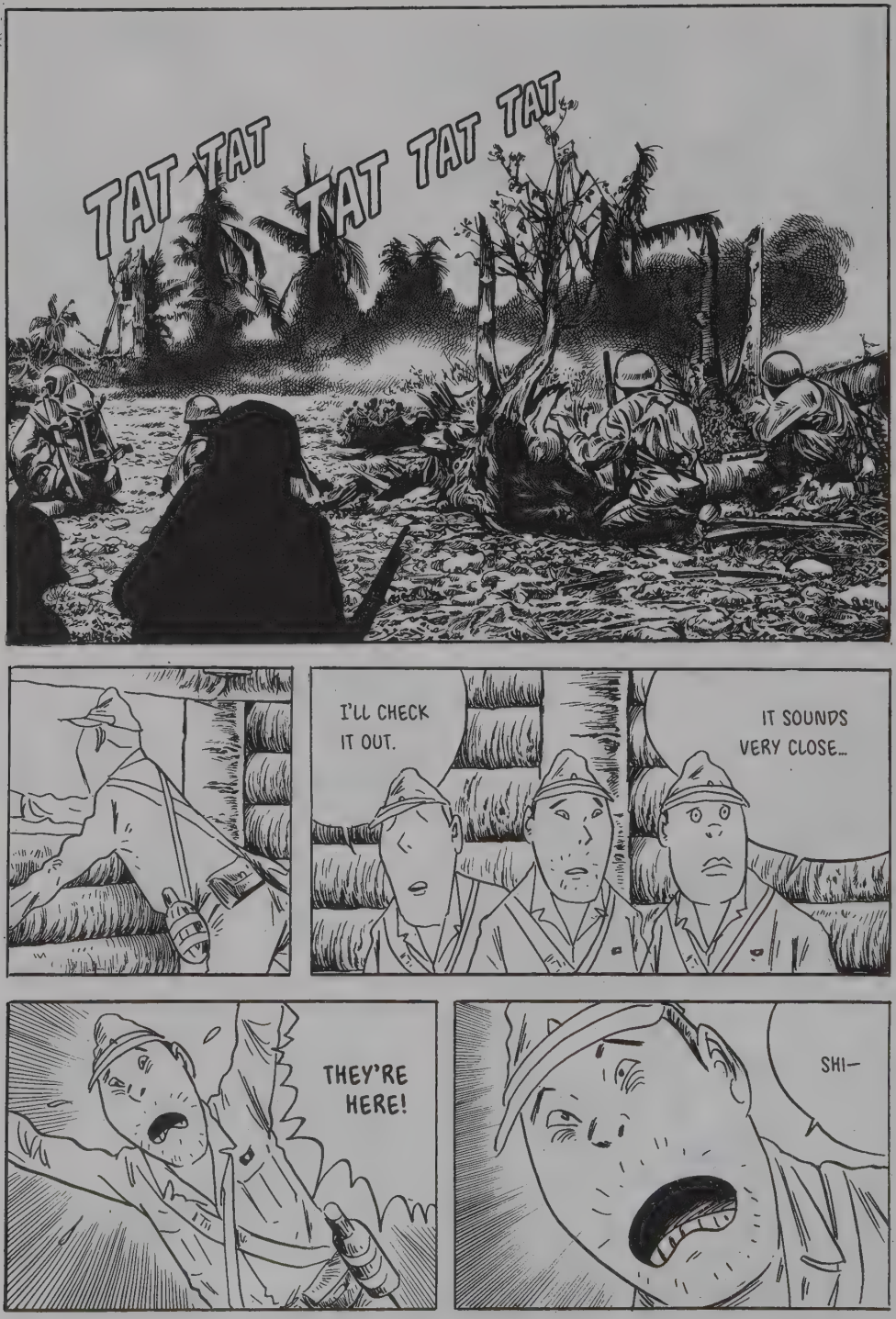

IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT MARUYAMA COULD NOT HEAR THE BOMBS ABOVE HIM OVER THE CLATTERING OF THE MESS KITS.


JUST ANOTHER ASSHOLE WHO THINKS I'M A WORM.

CLATTER
CLATTER
CLATTER

PYOOO


AAAH!


TAT TAT
TAT TAT TAT
I'LL CHECK IT OUT.
IT SOUNDS VERY CLOSE...
THEY'RE HERE!
SHI—

JUST AWFUL.

WOW!
GOT HIMSELF DECORATED.

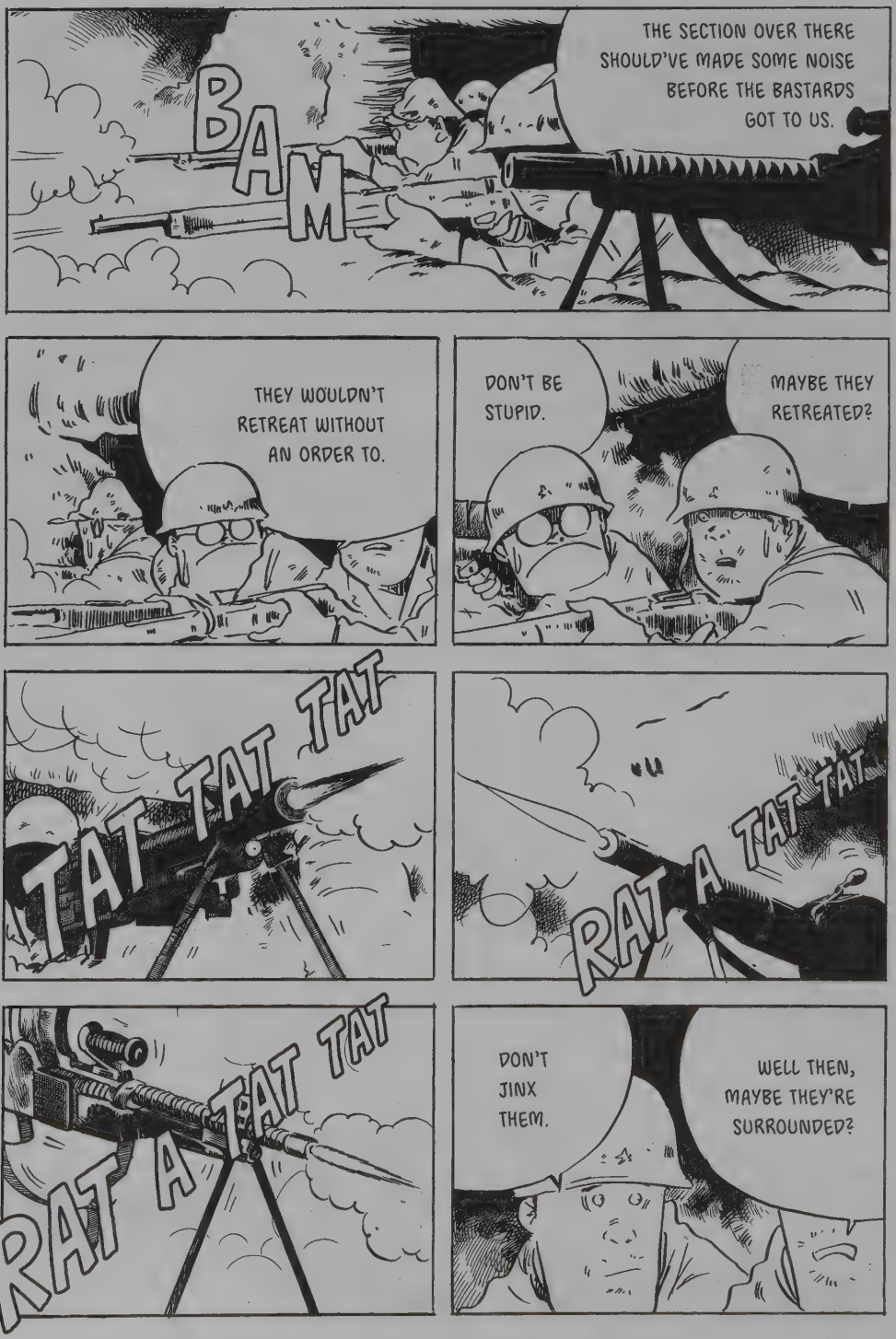
WITH HIS SPECIAL ATTACK UNIT, MIURA DID SOME REAL DAMAGE TO THOSE BASTARDS.

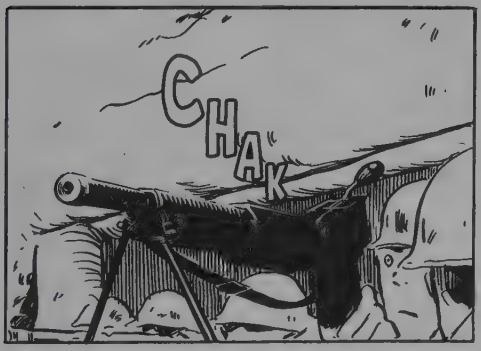
THE S.O.B. TOOK ALL OUR MESS KITS— HE'S PROB'LY HAVING A SNACK!

THAT MARUYAMA SURE IS TAKING HIS TIME!

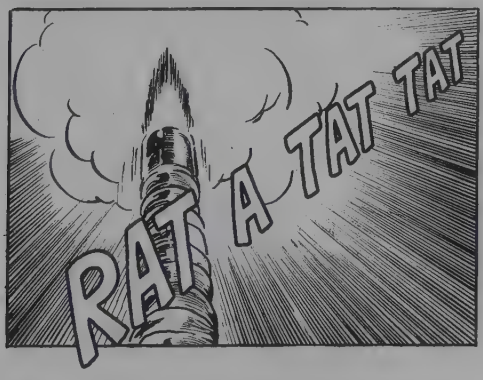
HMM, STRANGE.

RAT A TAT TAT
TAT TAT TAT


BAM
THE SECTION OVER THERE SHOULD'VE MADE SOME NOISE BEFORE THE BASTARDS GOT TO US.
THEY WOULDN'T RETREAT WITHOUT AN ORDER TO.
DON'T BE STUPID.
MAYBE THEY RETREATED?
TAT TAT TAT
RAT A TAT TAT
RAT A TAT TAT
DON'T JINX THEM.
WELL THEN, MAYBE THEY'RE SURROUNDED?


CHAK

MACHINE GUNS, FIRE!


RAT A TAT TAT

TAT TAT TAT

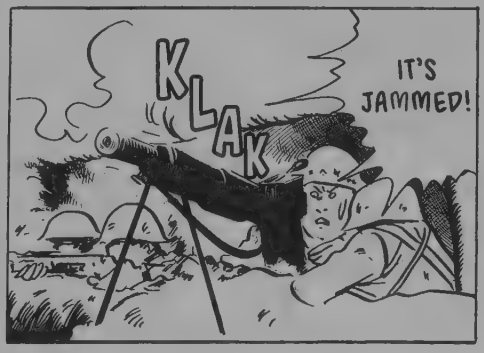
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
AGH!
KIRIMOTO! WHAT HAPPENED?!
GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!
THEY GOT ME IN THE EYE!

TAT TAT TAT

TAT TAT

TAT TAT TAT
TAT TAT TAT

CAN YOU GET IT WORKING? THEY'RE COMING!


KLAK
IT'S JAMMED!

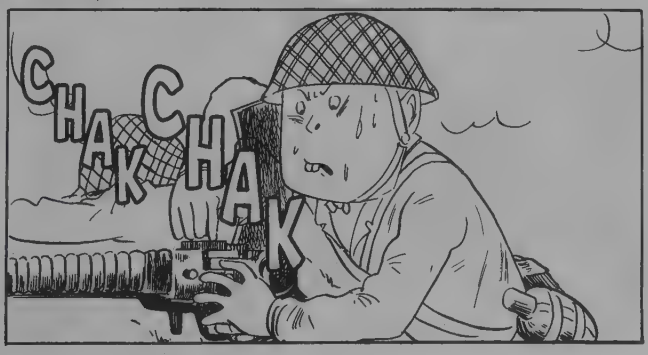
CHAK CHAK
STILL JAMMED!
BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM
KRRR KRRR
AH!

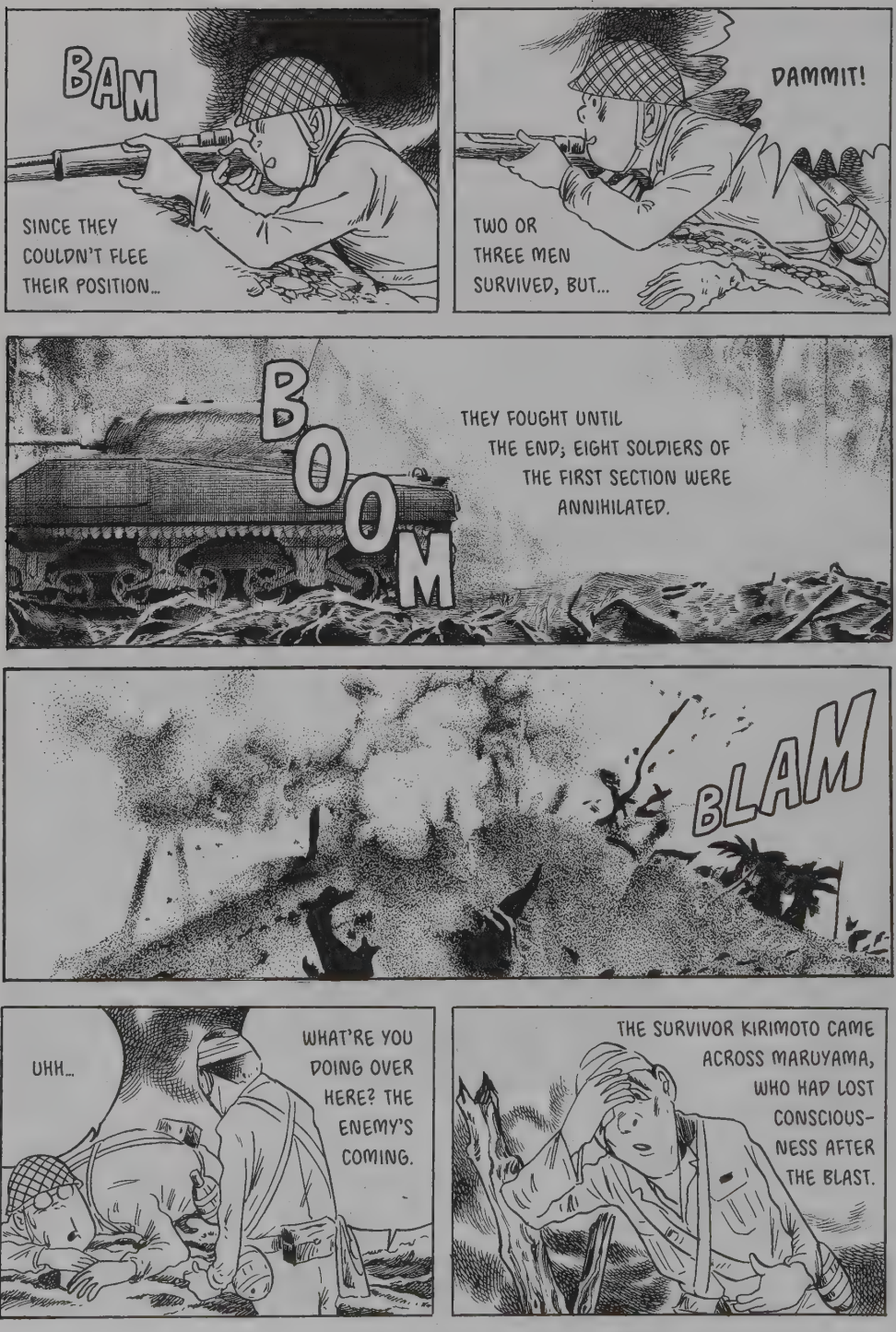
YES, SIR.

BANG
BAM

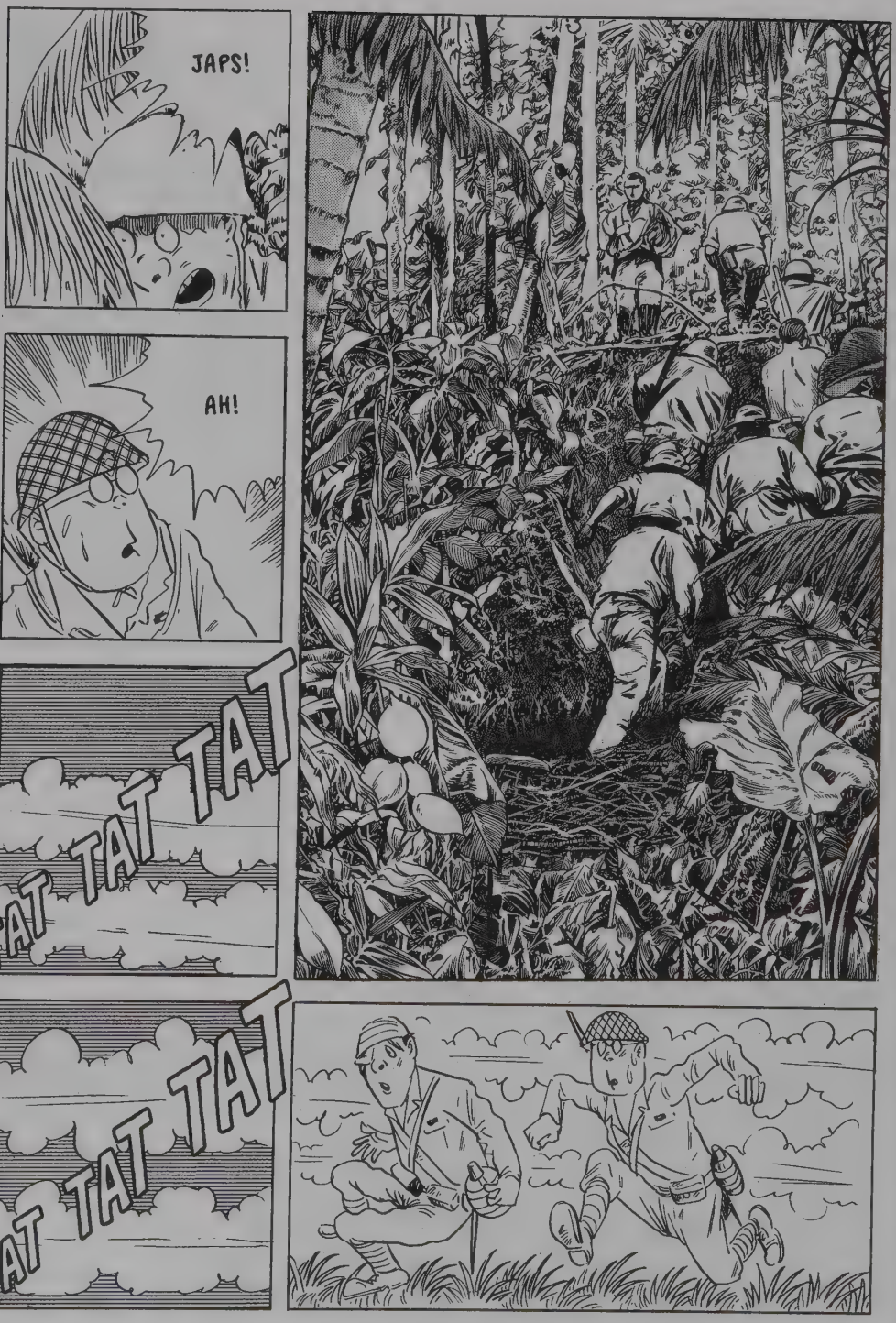
WHAT ABOUT THE GUN?!

FFFT

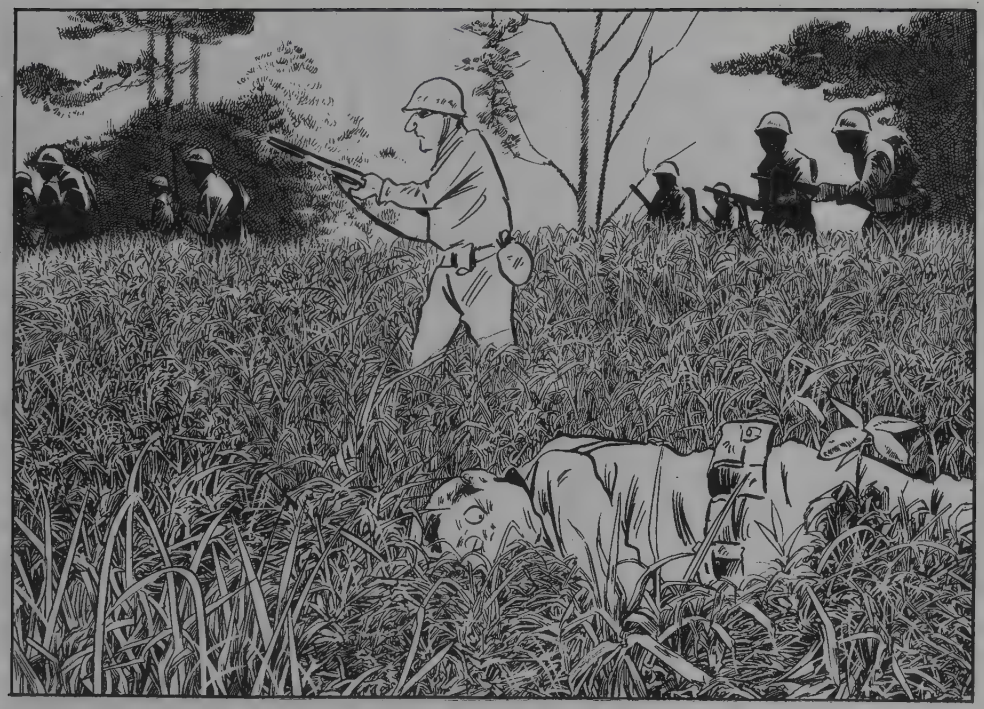

CHAK CHAK


BAM
SINCE THEY COULDN'T FLEE THEIR POSITION...
DAMMIT!
TWO OR THREE MEN SURVIVED, BUT...
BOOM
THEY FOUGHT UNTIL THE END; EIGHT SOLDIERS OF THE FIRST SECTION WERE ANNIHILATED.
BLAM
UHH...
WHAT'RE YOU DOING OVER HERE? THE ENEMY'S COMING.
THE SURVIVOR KIRIMOTO CAME ACROSS MARUYAMA, WHO HAD LOST CONSCIOUSNESS AFTER THE BLAST.

KABOOM
FLOP
THE SHOT KILLED CORPORAL YOSHIDA, THE SECTION LEADER, AND PRIVATE AKASAKI.
THUMP
TWITCH
TWITCH


JAPS!
AH!
TAT TAT TAT
TAT TAT TAT

HOLD ON A SECOND.
WELL, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.
MY HEAD HURTS AND MY EARS ARE RINGING AFTER THAT BLAST.
WELL, YOUR APPETITE'S FINE ANYWAY.
THERE SHOULD BE SOME BANANAS AROUND HERE.



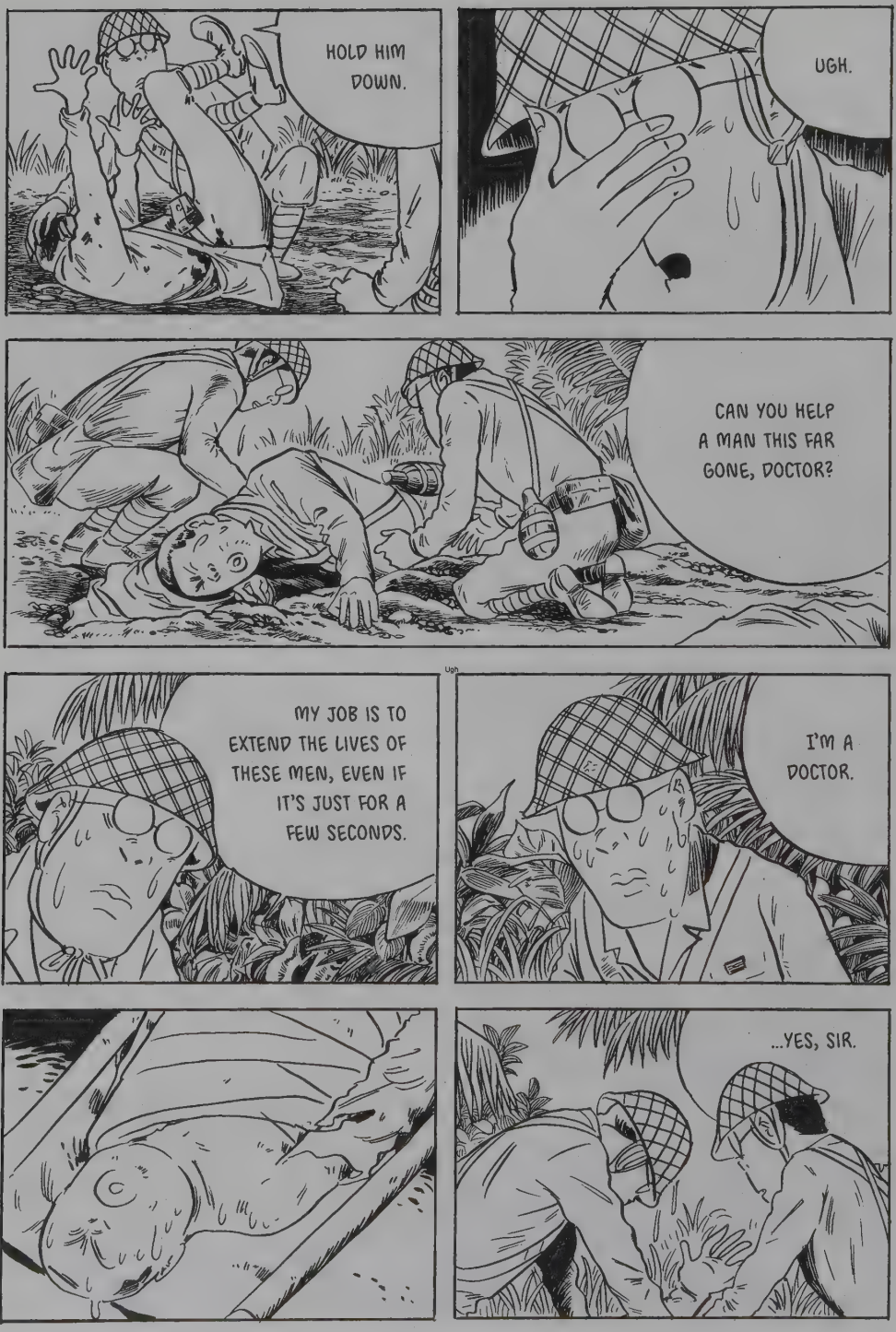
SERGEANT, IT'S THE ENEMY.

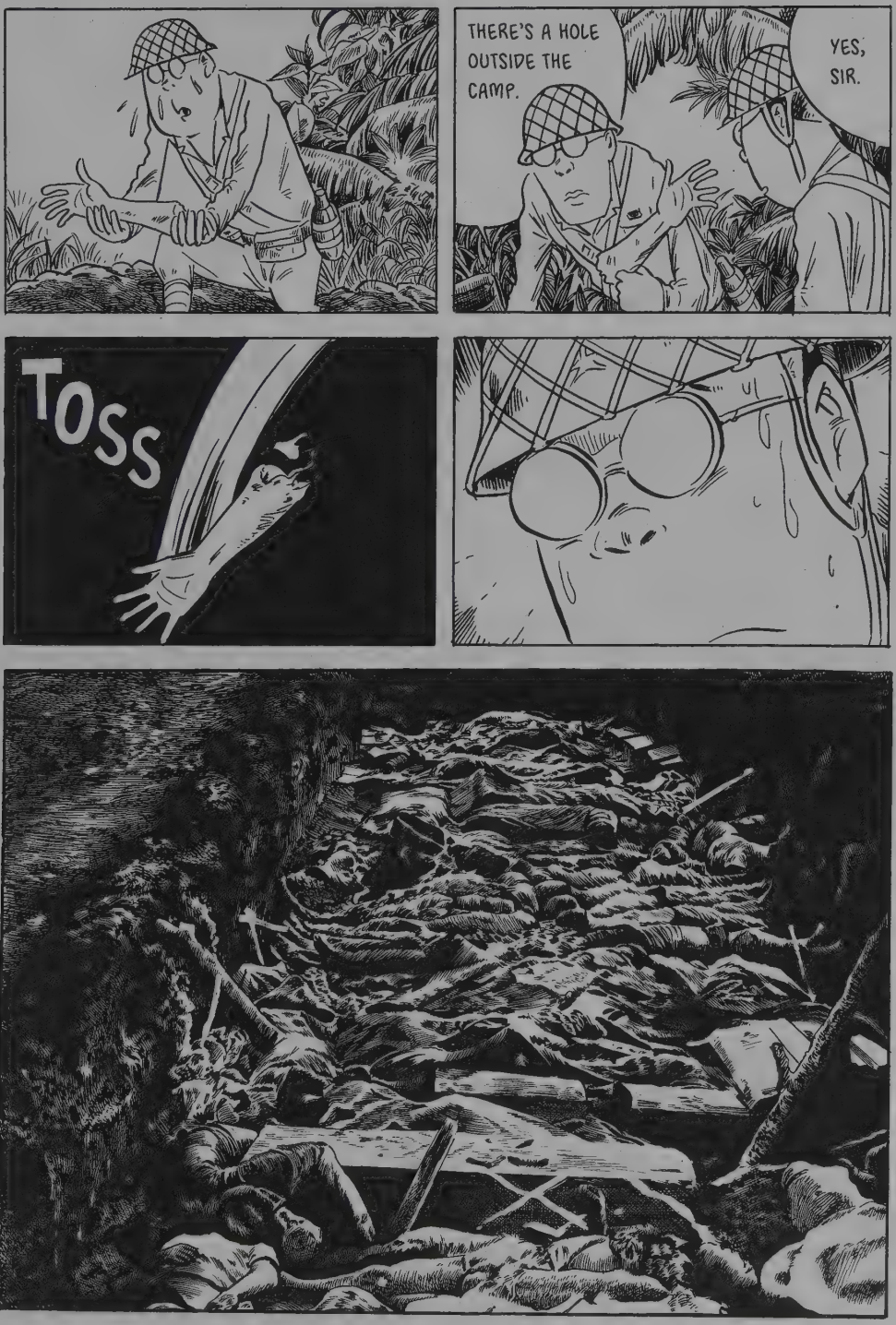
IT'S SERGEANT HONDA!
HUF
HUF

HUF

YES, SIR.
I TOLD YOU TO HELP, SO HELP!
BUT, I—
YOU'RE FINE! GIVE HIM A HAND.
HERE! HOLD THIS FOR ME.
IT'S OUT OF CONTROL.
WE HAVE THIS MANY CASUALTIES AND MALARIA VICTIMS?

CORPORAL YOSHIDA'S SECTION'S BEEN WIPED OUT.
SERGEANT HONDA!
WHY THE HELL'D YOU RETREAT?!
THERE'S A MEDIC THAT WAY. GO!
SO THAT AREA'S FALLEN INTO ENEMY HANDS?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?
CORPSMAN KAMIYA!
I GOT HIT IN A BOMB BLAST AND NOW I'M ALL DIZZY.
HEY! DOC'S OVER HERE!

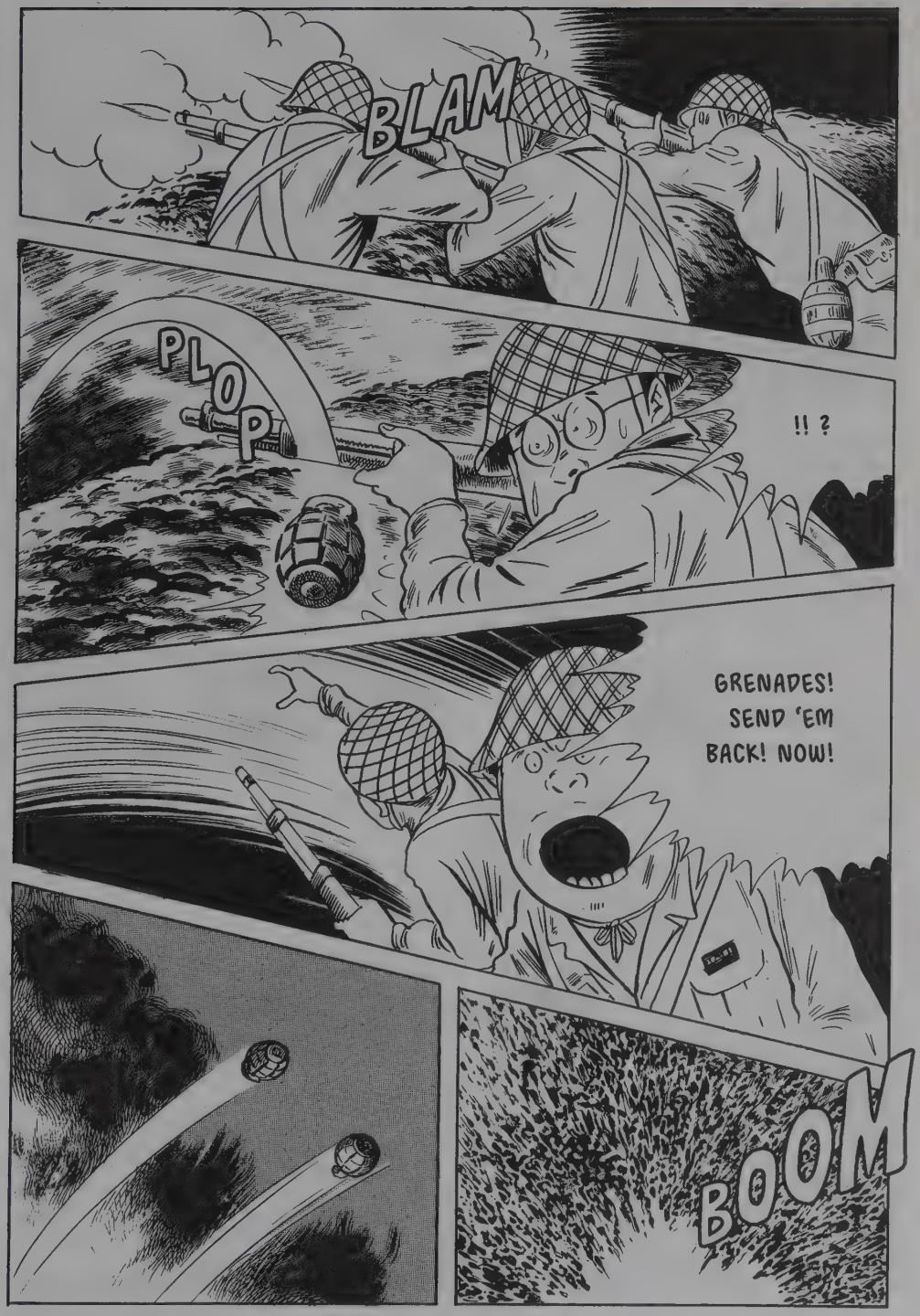

HOLD HIM DOWN.
UGH.
CAN YOU HELP A MAN THIS FAR GONE, DOCTOR?
Ugh
MY JOB IS TO EXTEND THE LIVES OF THESE MEN, EVEN IF IT'S JUST FOR A FEW SECONDS.
I'M A DOCTOR.
...YES, SIR.


THERE'S A HOLE OUTSIDE THE CAMP.
YES, SIR.
TOSS

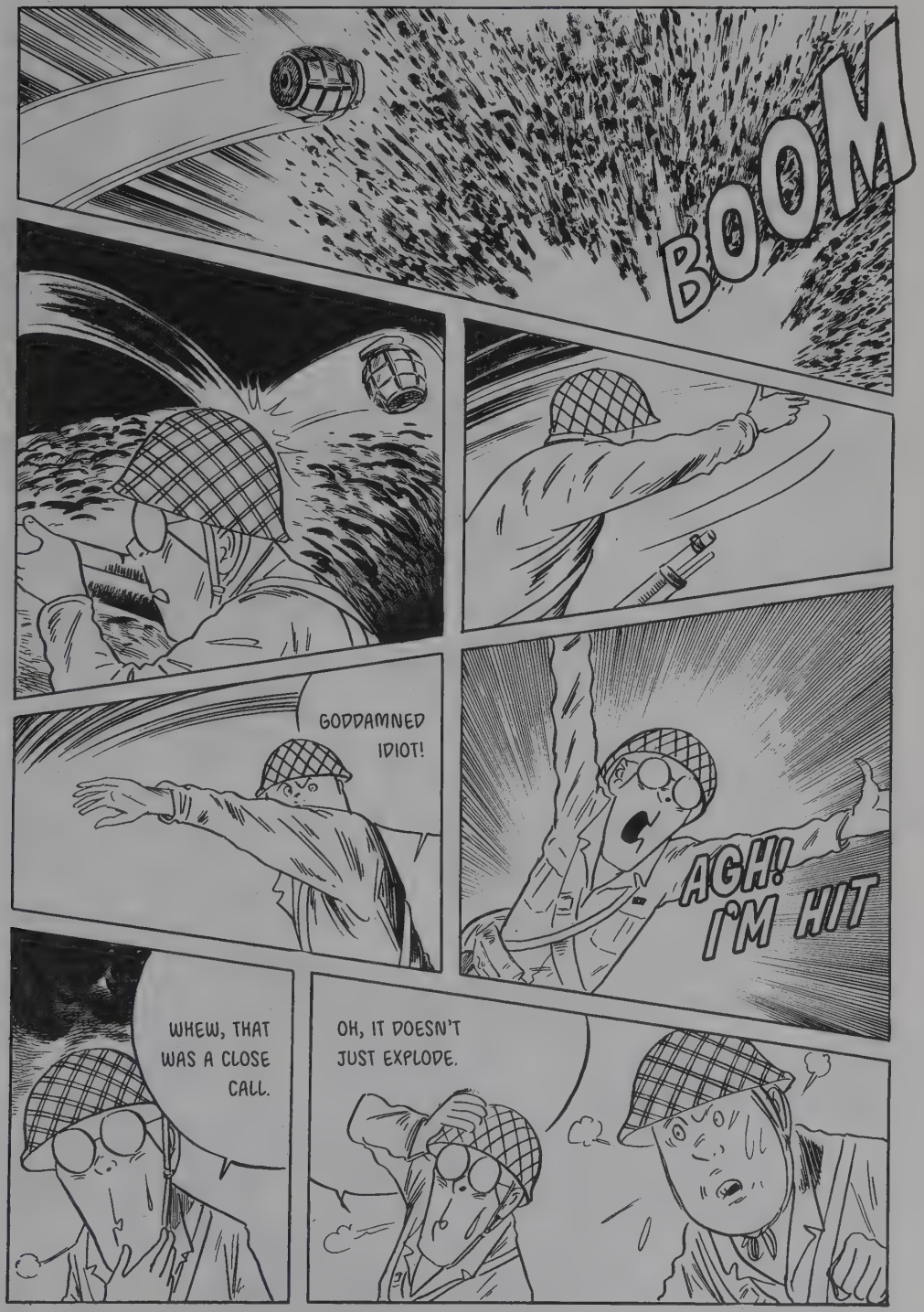
THEY'RE HERE!
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
BLAM
THE CORPSMAN ASKED ME TO HELP, SO—
SIR!
MARUYAMA, WHAT THE HELL'RE YOU DOIN'?
HURRY UP AND FIRE!
IDIOT!
WHAAAAP

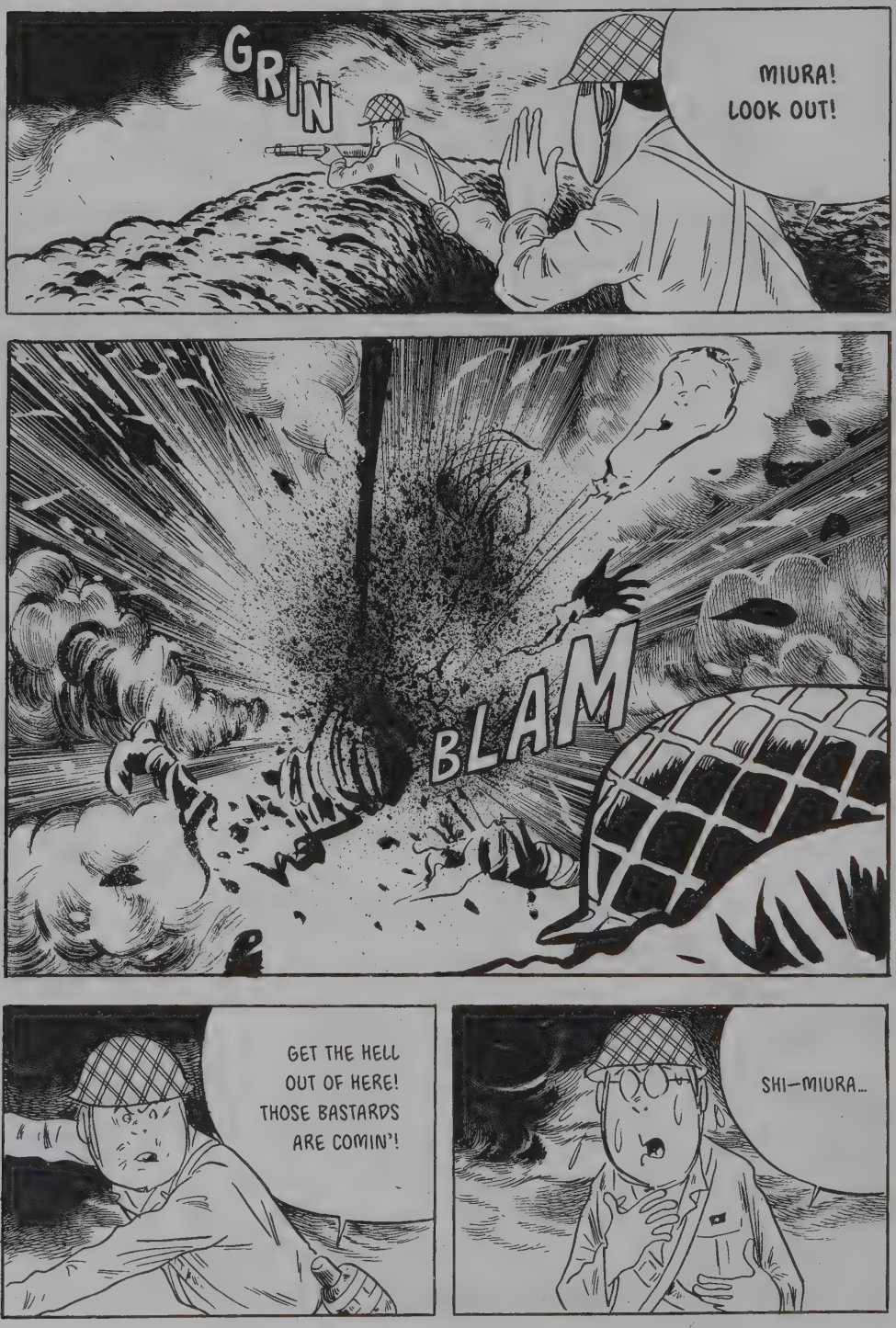
AAAGH
GET IN LINE!
IT HURTS IT HURTS
OUT OF THE WAY!
VROOOOM

KONK
KUNK
PLOP
BOOM
PLOP

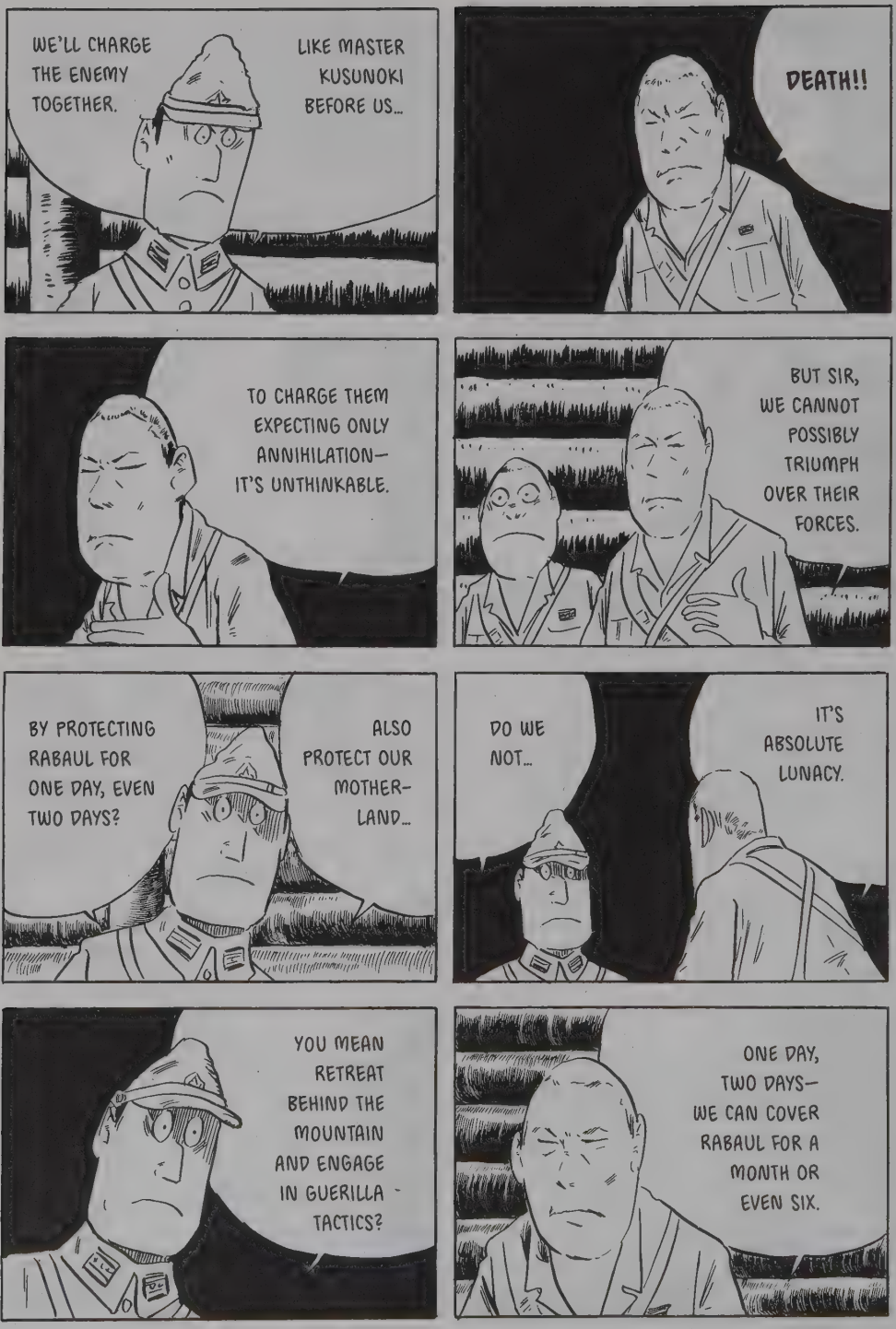

BLAM
PLOP
!! ?
GRENADES! SEND 'EM BACK! NOW!
BOOM

SERGEANT HONDA!
THE SITUATION'S COMPLETELY CHANGED. THE ENEMY HAS TAKEN THE RIVER.
WHAT?!
THE ORDER'S COME TO RETREAT TO BATTALION HQ!
MEN! FALL BACK!
THAT IS BAD.
THE RIVER?


BOOM
GODDAMNED IDIOT!
AGH! I'M HIT
WHEW, THAT WAS A CLOSE CALL.
OH, IT DOESN'T JUST EXPLODE.


GRIN
MIURA! LOOK OUT!
BLAM
GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE! THOSE BASTARDS ARE COMIN'!
SHI—MIURA...

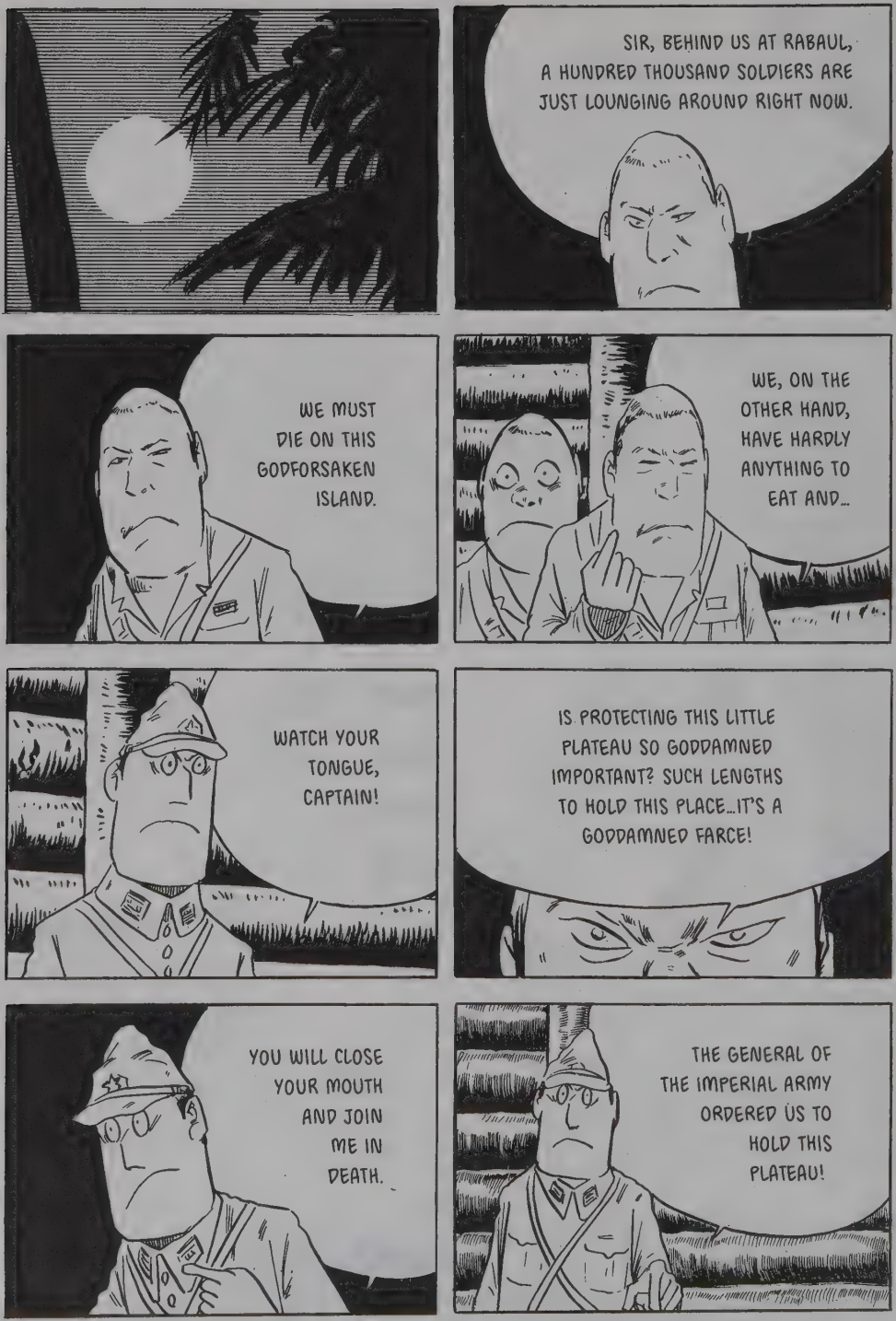
THEY'RE COMING!
HE SAID FALL BACK!
MIURA, ARE YOU SURE?
BLAM
I'LL HOLD THEM OFF. YOU GUYS GO.
SHIT!
BAM
BLAM

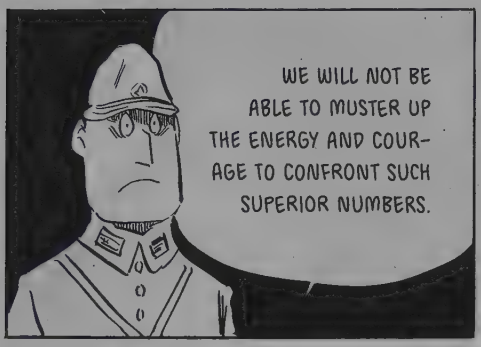

WE'LL CHARGE THE ENEMY TOGETHER.
LIKE MASTER KUSUNOKI BEFORE US...
DEATH!!
TO CHARGE THEM EXPECTING ONLY ANNIHILATION— IT'S UNTHINKABLE.
BUT SIR, WE CANNOT POSSIBLY TRIUMPH OVER THEIR FORCES.
BY PROTECTING RABAUL FOR ONE DAY, EVEN TWO DAYS?
ALSO PROTECT OUR MOTHER-LAND...
DO WE NOT...
IT'S ABSOLUTE LUNACY.
YOU MEAN RETREAT BEHIND THE MOUNTAIN AND ENGAGE IN GUERILLA TACTICS?
ONE DAY, TWO DAYS— WE CAN COVER RABAUL FOR A MONTH OR EVEN SIX.

THE DEATH OF SERGEANT HONDA

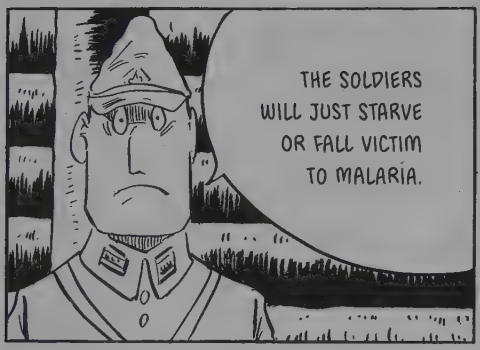
THE ONLY OPTION LEFT AT THIS POINT IS A NOBLE DEATH*.
THE ENEMY WENT AROUND AND TOOK THE RIVER FROM THE REAR; THEY HAVE NOW SURROUNDED US.

*SEE NOTES PAGE 367.

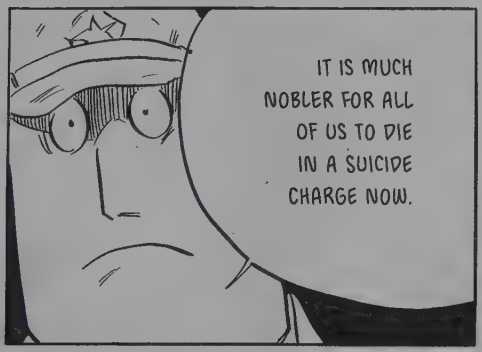

SIR, BEHIND US AT RABAUL, A HUNDRED THOUSAND SOLDIERS ARE JUST LOUNGING AROUND RIGHT NOW.
WE MUST DIE ON THIS GODFORSAKEN ISLAND.
WE, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE HARDLY ANYTHING TO EAT AND...
WATCH YOUR TONGUE, CAPTAIN!
IS PROTECTING THIS LITTLE PLATEAU SO GODDAMNED IMPORTANT? SUCH LENGTHS TO HOLD THIS PLACE...IT'S A GODDAMNED FARCE!
YOU WILL CLOSE YOUR MOUTH AND JOIN ME IN DEATH.
THE GENERAL OF THE IMPERIAL ARMY ORDERED US TO HOLD THIS PLATEAU!


WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO MUSTER UP THE ENERGY AND COURAGE TO CONFRONT SUCH SUPERIOR NUMBERS.

THE MOMENT WE LEAVE THIS CAMP...

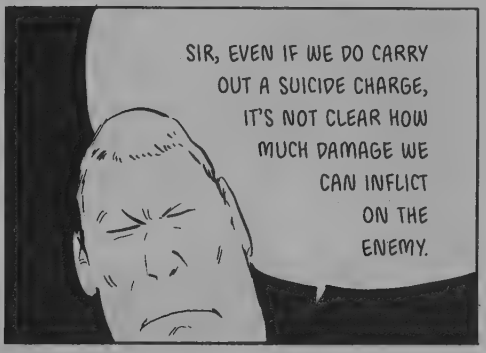

THE SOLDIERS WILL JUST STARVE OR FALL VICTIM TO MALARIA.

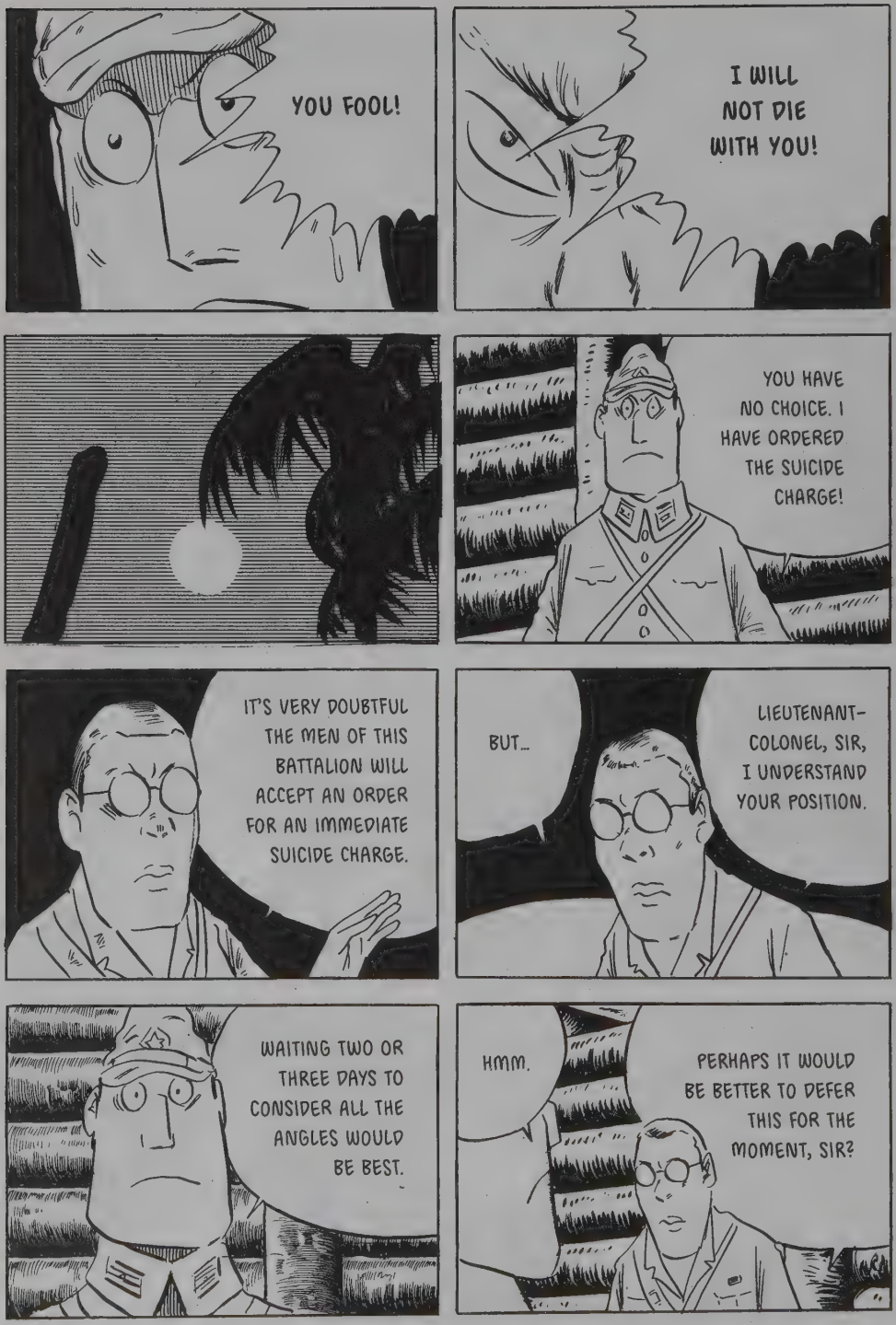
LIVING IN THE JUNGLE FOR A WEEK, A MONTH...


IT IS MUCH NOBLER FOR ALL OF US TO DIE IN A SUICIDE CHARGE NOW.

FAR BETTER THAN THAT TRAGIC DEATH IS TO ATTACK NOW WHILE WE HAVE THE STRENGTH.

CAPTAIN, ARE YOU SAYING THAT YOU WILL NOT DIE ALONGSIDE ME?!


SIR, EVEN IF WE DO CARRY OUT A SUICIDE CHARGE, IT'S NOT CLEAR HOW MUCH DAMAGE WE CAN INFLICT ON THE ENEMY.

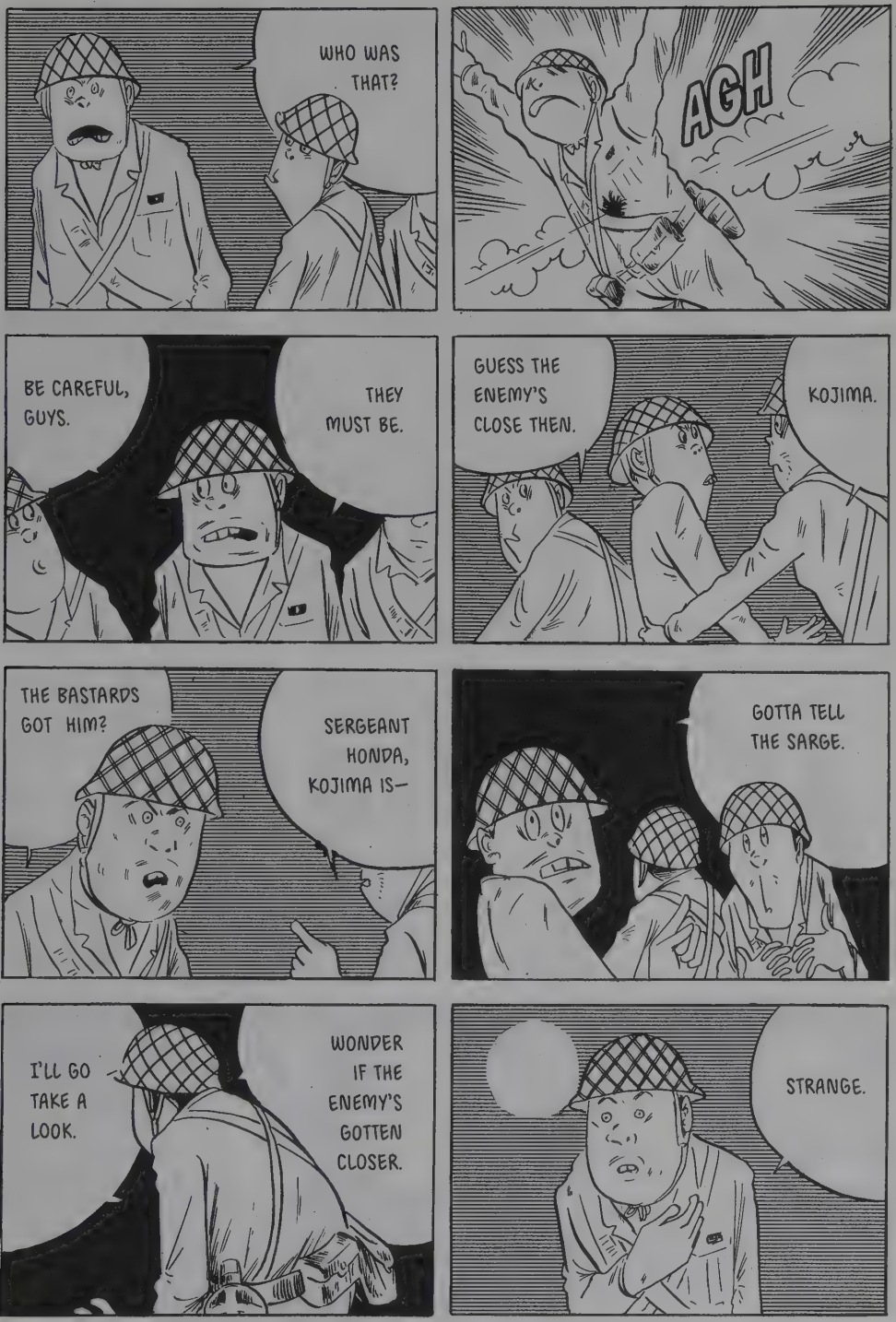

YOU FOOL!
I WILL NOT DIE WITH YOU!
YOU HAVE NO CHOICE. I HAVE ORDERED THE SUICIDE CHARGE!
IT'S VERY DOUBTFUL THE MEN OF THIS BATTALION WILL ACCEPT AN ORDER FOR AN IMMEDIATE SUICIDE CHARGE.
BUT...
LIEUTENANT-COLONEL, SIR, I UNDERSTAND YOUR POSITION.
WAITING TWO OR THREE DAYS TO CONSIDER ALL THE ANGLES WOULD BE BEST.
HMM.
PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BETTER TO DEFER THIS FOR THE MOMENT, SIR?

TO SACRIFICE OURSELVES TO PROLONG THE LIVES OF THOSE HUNDRED THOUSAND SOLDIERS IN RABAUL...
SIR, AT THE RISK OF REPEATING MYSELF, IF OUR AIM IS...
WE COULD BEST ACHIEVE THIS BY RETREATING BEHIND THE MOUNTAIN AND ENGAGING IN GUERILLA TACTICS.
AS COMMANDER OF THESE FORCES, I CANNOT ORDER MY MEN TO DIE LIKE DOGS!
THAT'S ONLY IF IT GOES WELL AND IN THE END, WE WILL ONLY BE MAKING OUR MEN DIE LIKE DOGS.
HOW DARE YOU?!
A SUICIDE CHARGE IS THE DOG'S DEATH!
LIKE DOGS...

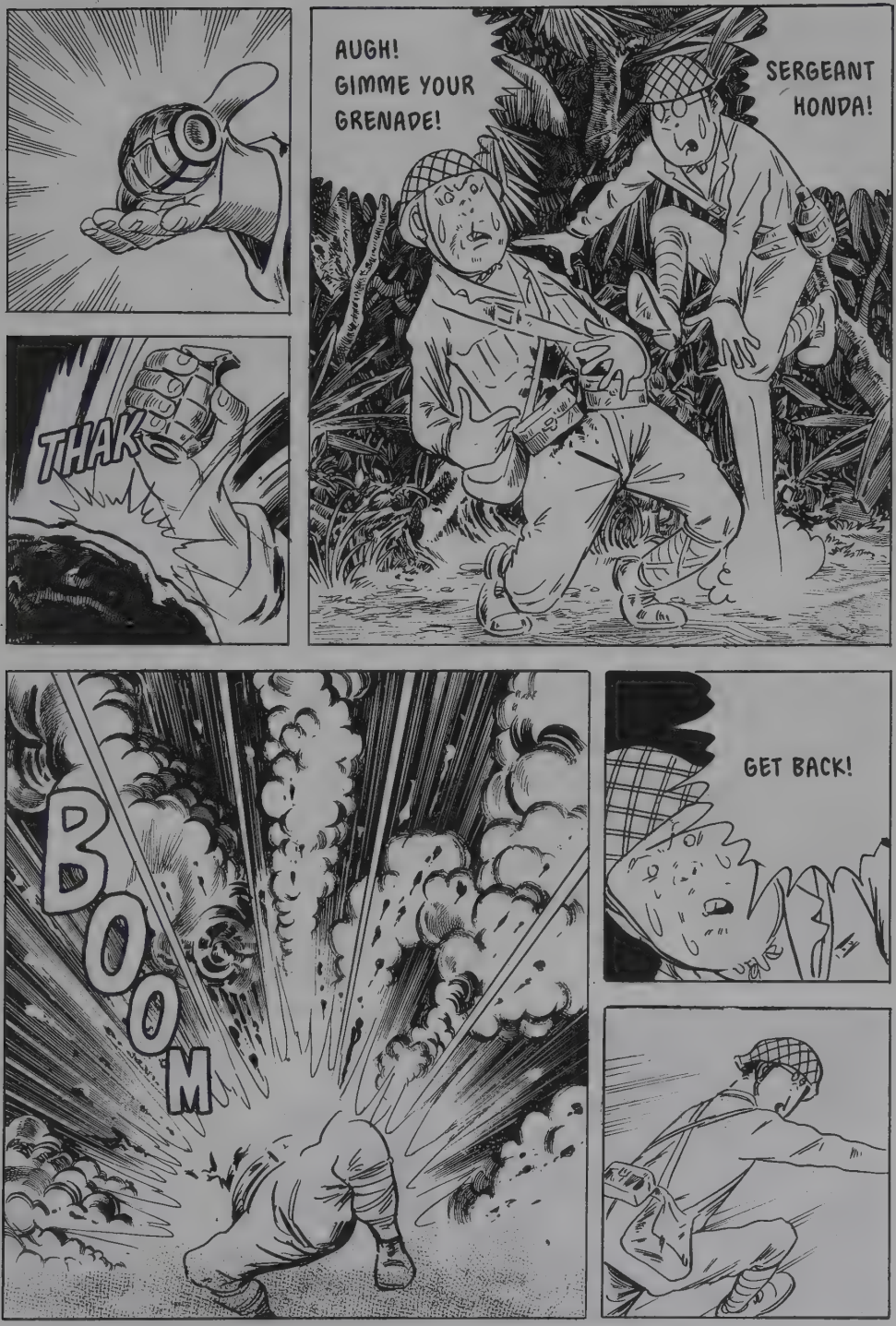
ALL RIGHT!
GOTTA GO SOMEWHERE THE GUYS HAVEN'T ALREADY GOT TO.
VSH
DRIP
GULP
DRIP
BAM BAM BAM
SHF SHF
HEH

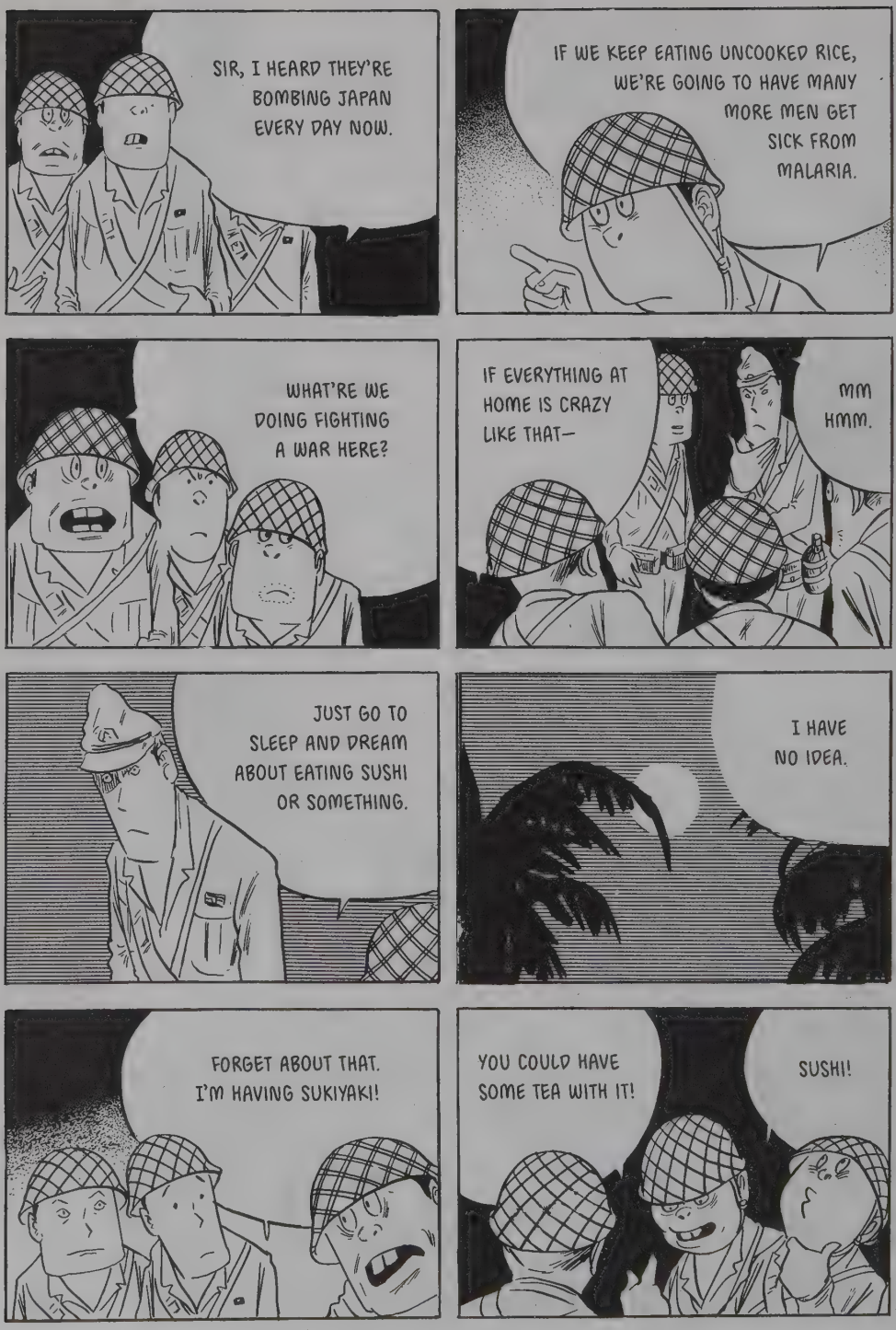
SIGH
GOT IT!
CUT THE VINES ON THE TREES AND HAVE A DRINK. WATER DRIPS OUT, YOU KNOW.
HUH.
I'M SO THIRSTY I CAN'T THINK.
CRAP, THEY'RE ALREADY CUT.
SHFF SHFF

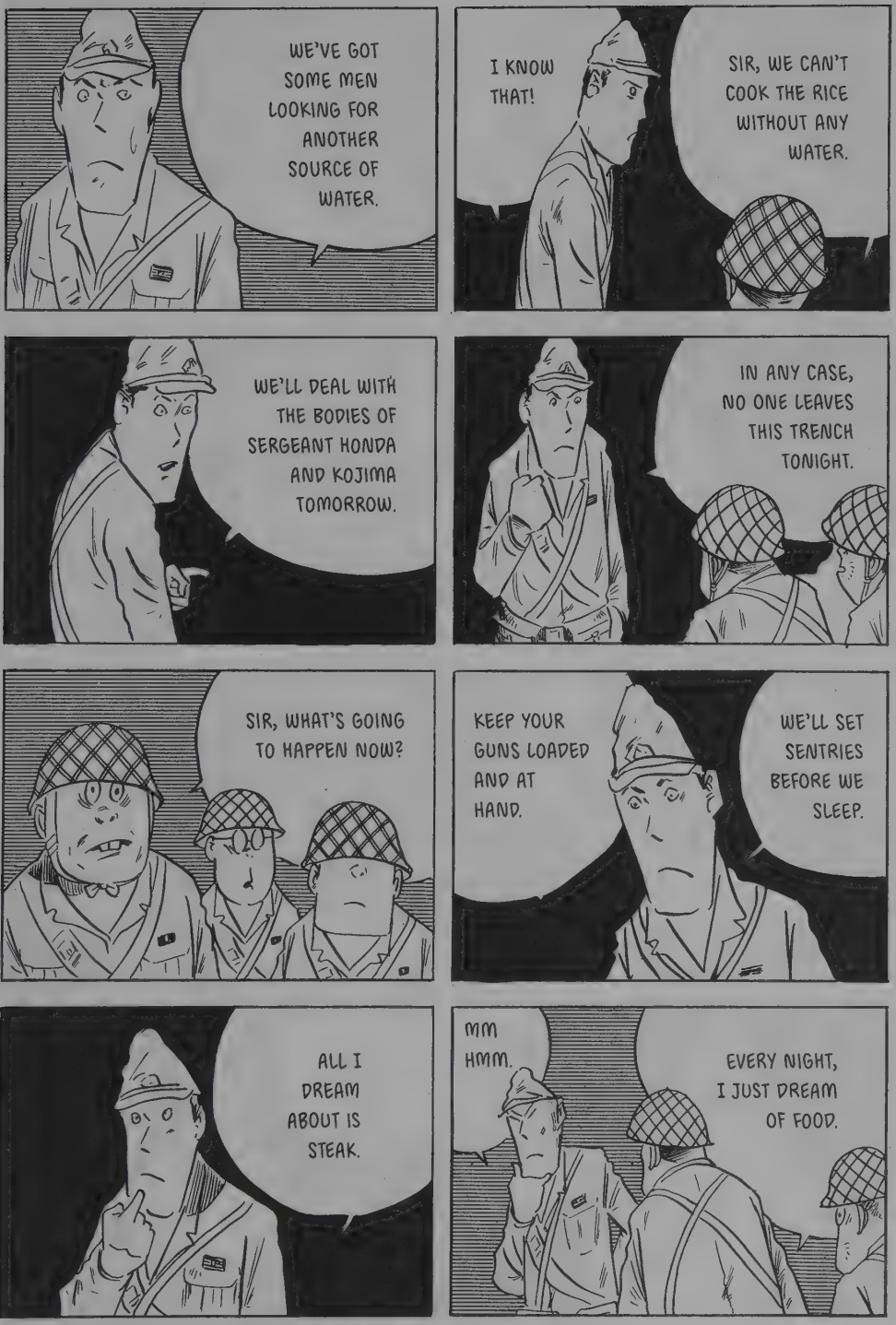
YES, SIR.
YOU, COME WITH ME.
SHFF SHFF
IT'S THEM!
SHFF SHFF
SHFF SHFF
THE ENEMY!
AHH
BLAM

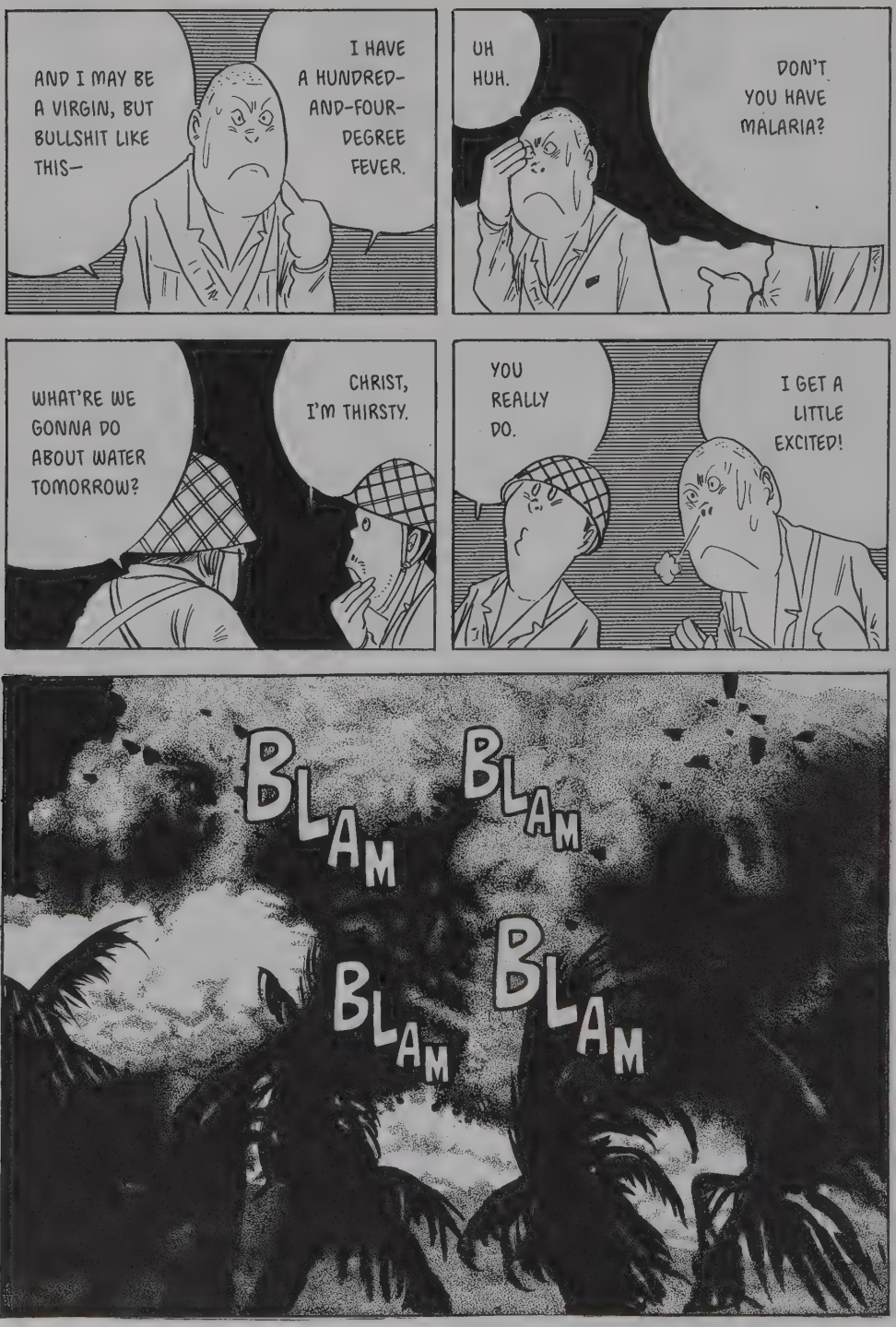

WHO WAS THAT?
AGH
BE CAREFUL, GUYS.
THEY MUST BE.
GUESS THE ENEMY'S CLOSE THEN.
KOJIMA.
THE BASTARDS GOT HIM?
SERGEANT HONDA, KOJIMA IS—
GOTTA TELL THE SARGE.
I'LL GO TAKE A LOOK.
WONDER IF THE ENEMY'S GOTTEN CLOSER.
STRANGE.

WHO THE HELL JUST FIRED?
SHFF SHFF
IDIOT!
SHIT!
YOU GOT SERGEANT HONDA IN THE GUT AND NOW HE'S DEAD.
WHAT HAPPENED?
'CAUSE YOU'RE SO DAMNED LILY-LIVERED!
CHRIST! THIS IS ONE HELL OF A MESS.
AND KOJIMA TOO...
SERGEANT HONDA IS DEAD.


AUGH!
GIMME YOUR
GRENADE!
SERGEANT
HONDA!
THAK
BOOM
GET BACK!


SIR, I HEARD THEY'RE BOMBING JAPAN EVERY DAY NOW.
IF WE KEEP EATING UNCOOKED RICE, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE MANY MORE MEN GET SICK FROM MALARIA.
WHAT'RE WE DOING FIGHTING A WAR HERE?
IF EVERYTHING AT HOME IS CRAZY LIKE THAT—
MM HMM.
JUST GO TO SLEEP AND DREAM ABOUT EATING SUSHI OR SOMETHING.
I HAVE NO IDEA.
FORGET ABOUT THAT. I'M HAVING SUKIYAKI!
YOU COULD HAVE SOME TEA WITH IT!
SUSHI!

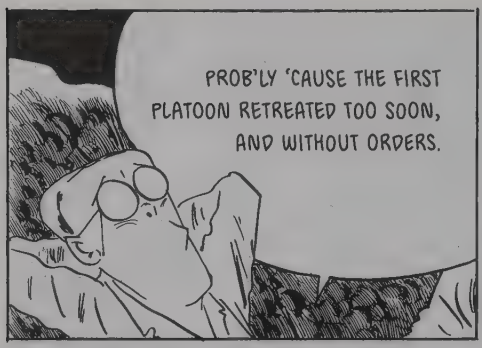

WE'VE GOT SOME MEN LOOKING FOR ANOTHER SOURCE OF WATER.
I KNOW THAT!
SIR, WE CAN'T COOK THE RICE WITHOUT ANY WATER.
WE'LL DEAL WITH THE BODIES OF SERGEANT HONDA AND KOJIMA TOMORROW.
IN ANY CASE, NO ONE LEAVES THIS TRENCH TONIGHT.
SIR, WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NOW?
KEEP YOUR GUNS LOADED AND AT HAND.
WE'LL SET SENTRIES BEFORE WE SLEEP.
ALL I DREAM ABOUT IS STEAK.
MM HMM.
EVERY NIGHT, I JUST DREAM OF FOOD.

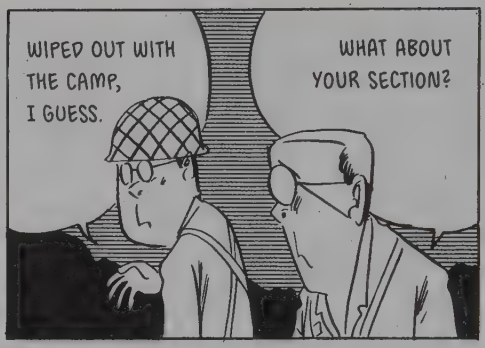

AND I MAY BE A VIRGIN, BUT BULLSHIT LIKE THIS—
I HAVE A HUNDRED-AND-FOUR-DEGREE FEVER.
UH HUH.
DON'T YOU HAVE MALARIA?
WHAT'RE WE GONNA DO ABOUT WATER TOMORROW?
CHRIST, I'M THIRSTY.
YOU REALLY DO.
I GET A LITTLE EXCITED!
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

*A SWEET BEAN JELLY.

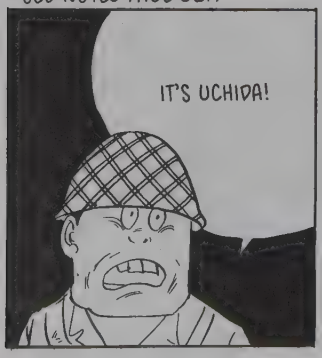
*BUN FILLED WITH A SWEET BEAN PASTE.

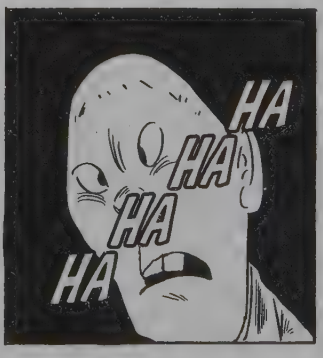
*SEE NOTES PAGE 367.

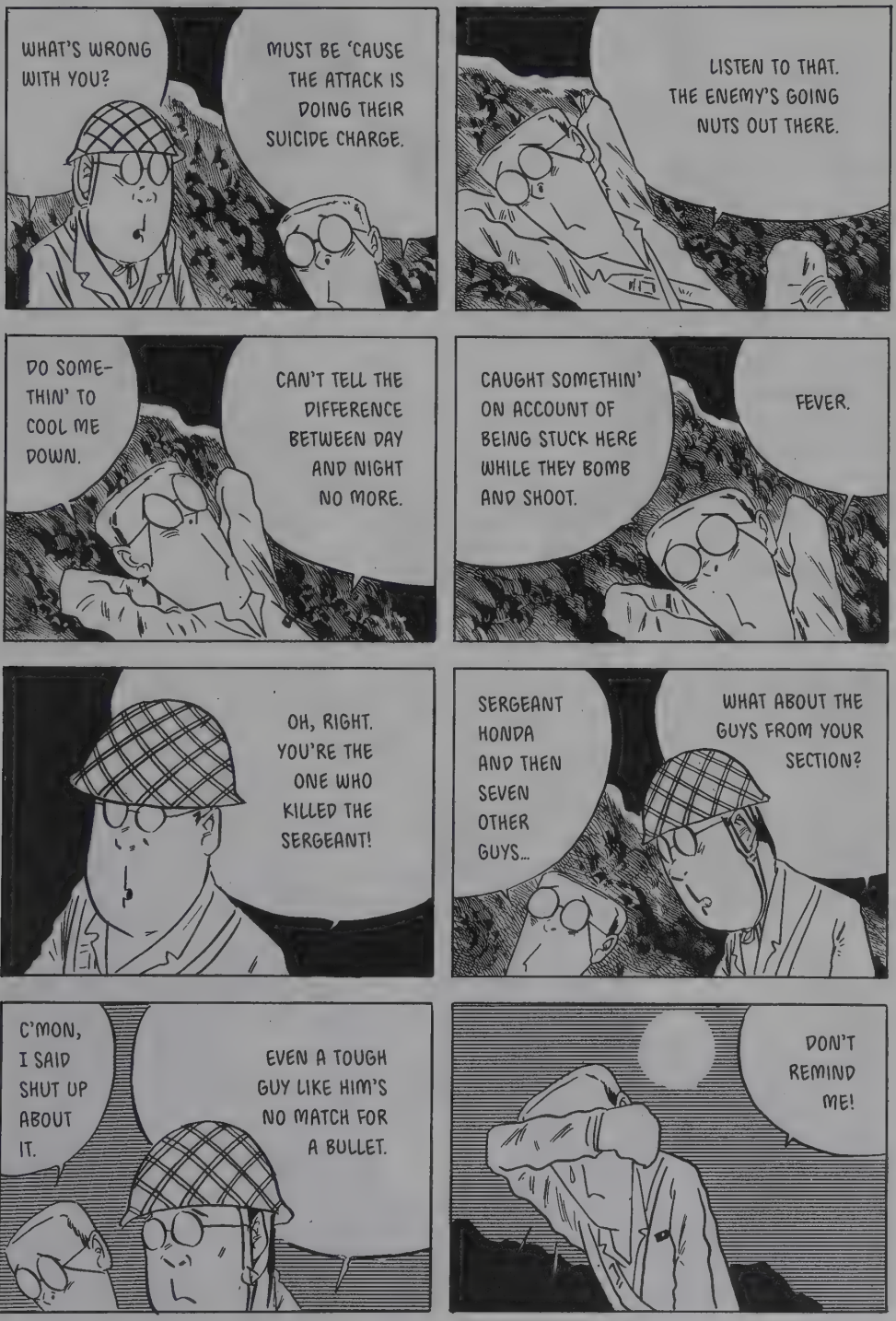


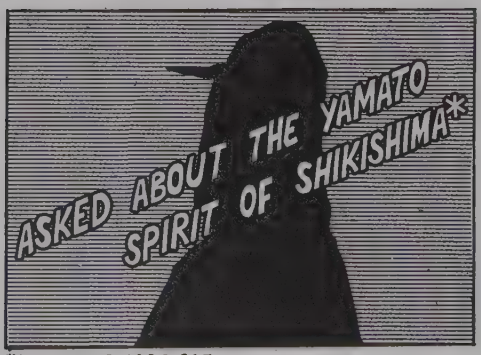


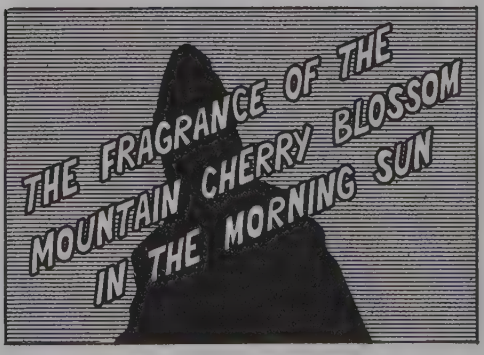
*SEE NOTES PAGE 367.






WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?
MUST BE 'CAUSE THE ATTACK IS DOING THEIR SUICIDE CHARGE.
LISTEN TO THAT. THE ENEMY'S GOING NUTS OUT THERE.
DO SOMETHIN' TO COOL ME DOWN.
CAN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DAY AND NIGHT NO MORE.
CAUGHT SOMETHIN' ON ACCOUNT OF BEING STUCK HERE WHILE THEY BOMB AND SHOOT.
FEVER.
OH, RIGHT. YOU'RE THE ONE WHO KILLED THE SERGEANT!
SERGEANT HONDA AND THEN SEVEN OTHER GUYS...
WHAT ABOUT THE GUYS FROM YOUR SECTION?
C'MON, I SAID SHUT UP ABOUT IT.
EVEN A TOUGH GUY LIKE HIM'S NO MATCH FOR A BULLET.
DON'T REMIND ME!



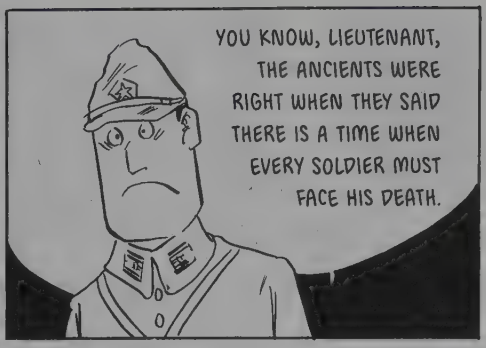


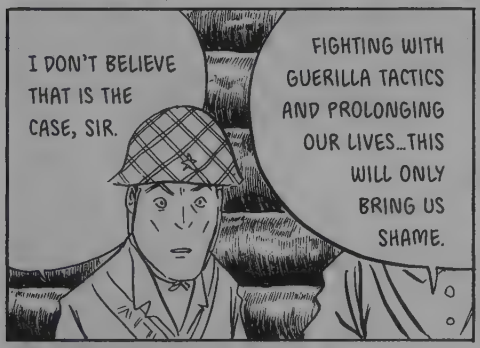
*SEE NOTES PAGE 367.

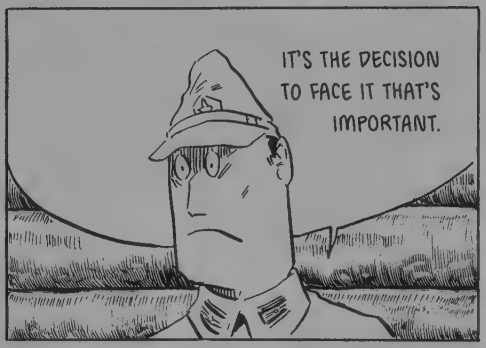
S-STOP HIM! HE'S HEADED FOR THE ENEMY!
HOLY SHIT, HE'S TOUGH.
WHAT THE HELL'RE YOU DOIN'?
HA HA HA HA!
UCHIDA!
HOLD ON TO HIM!

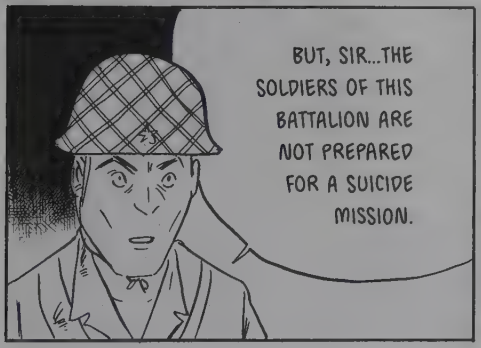
A SUICIDE CHARGE IS OUR ONLY OPTION!
SO YOU'RE SAYING—
SOLDIERS! ASSEMBLE FOR BRIEFING!
I'M DONE FOR.
HAAH
JESUS, YOU'RE BURNING UP.

KREE
KREE


YOU KNOW, LIEUTENANT, THE ANCIENTS WERE RIGHT WHEN THEY SAID THERE IS A TIME WHEN EVERY SOLDIER MUST FACE HIS DEATH.

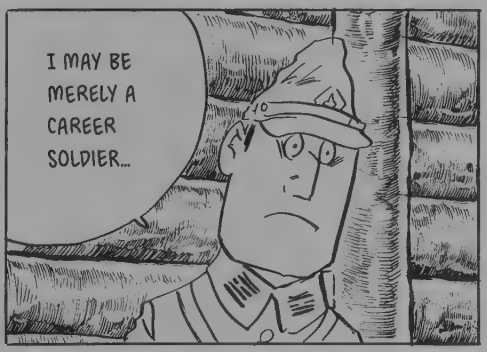

I DON'T BELIEVE THAT IS THE CASE, SIR.
FIGHTING WITH GUERILLA TACTICS AND PROLONGING OUR LIVES...THIS WILL ONLY BRING US SHAME.

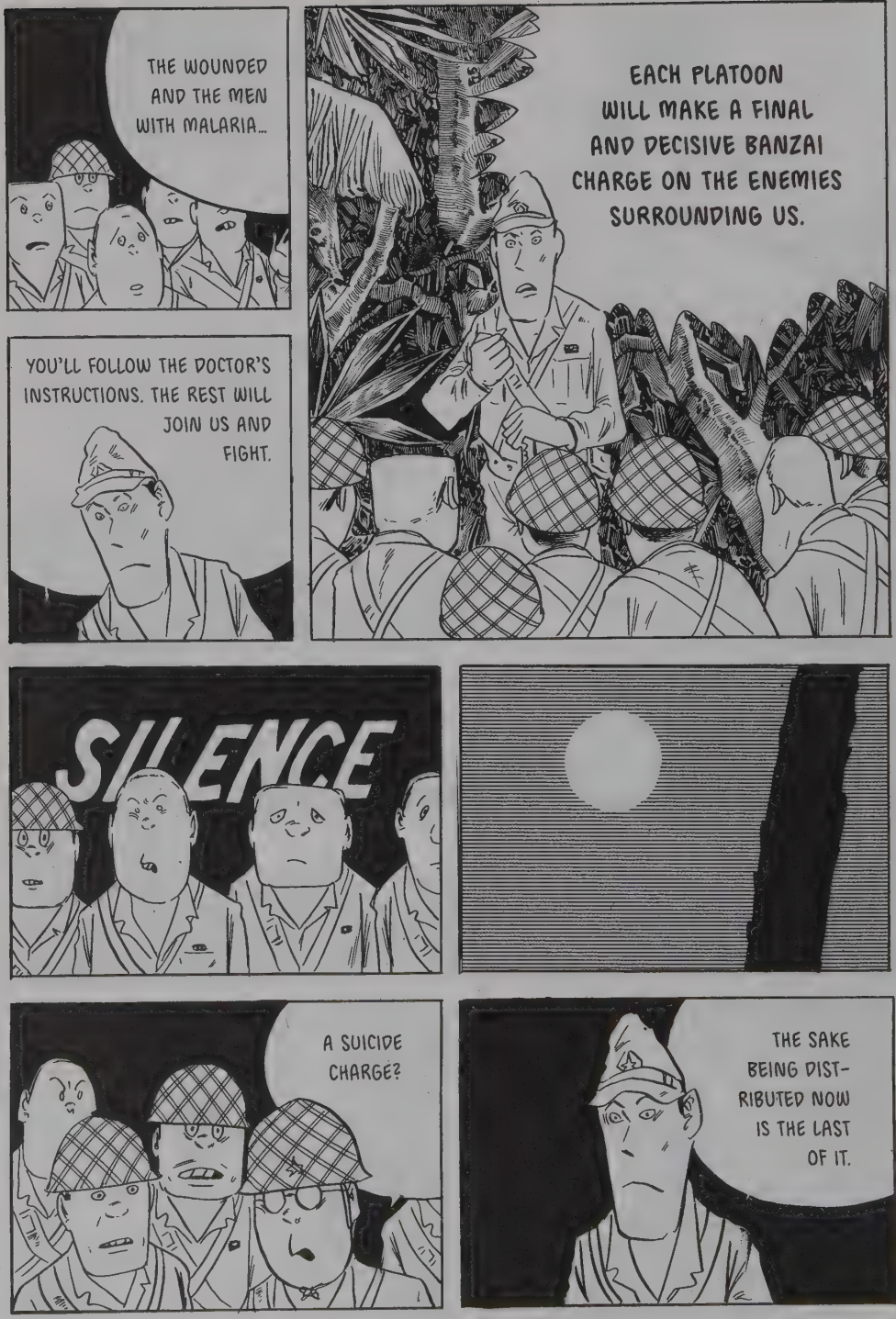

IT'S THE DECISION TO FACE IT THAT'S IMPORTANT.


BUT, SIR...THE SOLDIERS OF THIS BATTALION ARE NOT PREPARED FOR A SUICIDE MISSION.

GUERILLA WARFARE WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT THAN A SUICIDE CHARGE, WILL IT NOT?
IN THE JUNGLE, WITH NO FOOD AVAILABLE TO US...

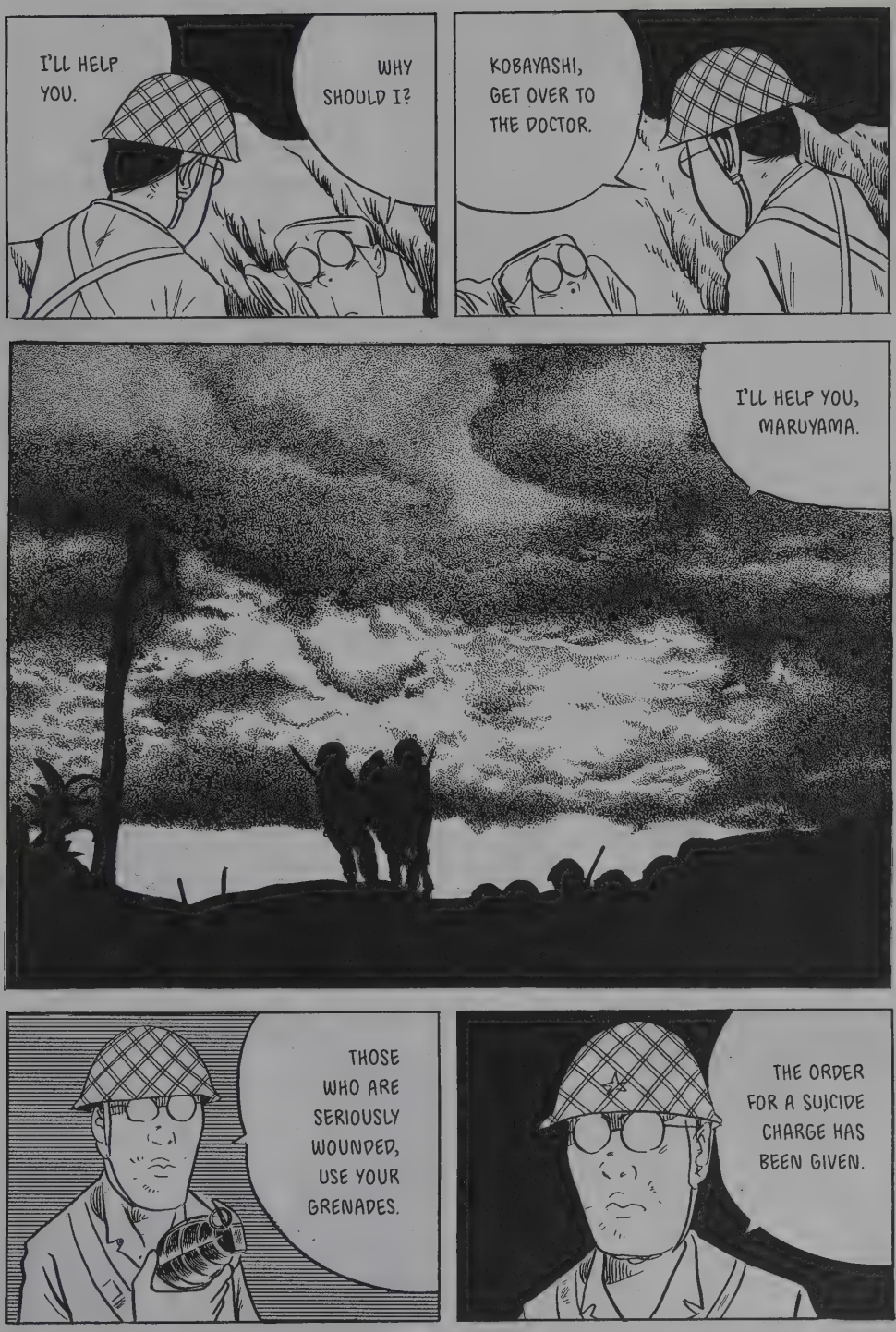
BUT I'D LIKE TO DETERMINE THE PLACE OF MY DEATH.

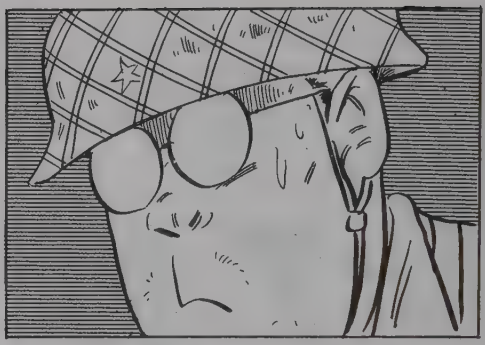

I MAY BE MERELY A CAREER SOLDIER...

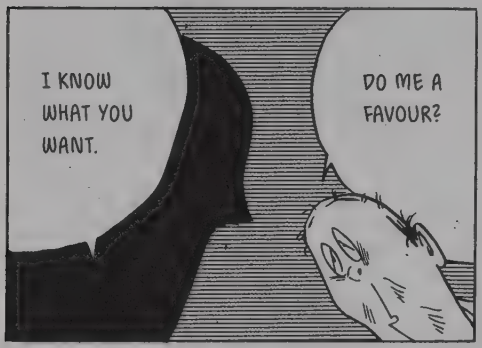

THE WOUNDED AND THE MEN WITH MALARIA...
EACH PLATOON WILL MAKE A FINAL AND DECISIVE BANZAI CHARGE ON THE ENEMIES SURROUNDING US.
YOU'LL FOLLOW THE DOCTOR'S INSTRUCTIONS. THE REST WILL JOIN US AND FIGHT.
SILENCE
A SUICIDE CHARGE?
THE SAKE BEING DIST-RIBUTED NOW IS THE LAST OF IT.

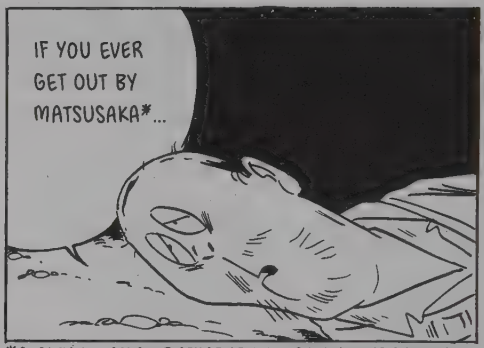
WHAT?!
HEY, ANPAN!
HA HA HA
KOBAYASHI!
I'VE ENDED UP LIKE THAT ONCE OR TWICE.
OKAY.
HIS BRAIN'S COOKED. LET HIM SLEEP.
YOU KNOW, ANPAN.
GUYS— LISTEN UP!
OH YEAH?
HAPPENS TO JUST ABOUT EVERYONE ONCE THE FEVER GETS OVER FORTY-TWO OR SO.
SILENCE
AT ONE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING...

YOU'LL GO IN WITH ME.
ONCE THE PLATOONS HAVE ATTACKED...
YOU OTHER WOUNDED MEN...
ONES THAT CAN'T, WELL, THEY HAVE THEIR GRENADES.
ANYONE WHO CAN MOVE GOES.
DOCTOR, WHAT ABOUT THE MEN WITH FEVERS?
SECOND PLATOON! FALL IN!
MMM.
KOBAYASHI, HOW'RE YOU DOING?
OH? WHERE?
I GOTTA GO, KOBAYASHI.

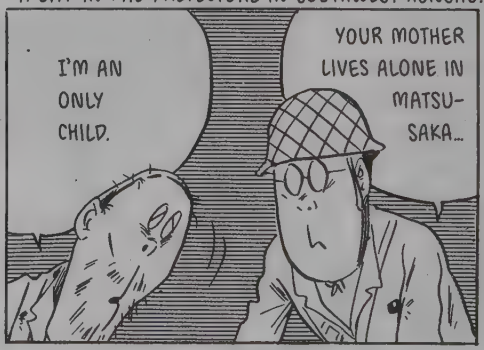

I'LL HELP YOU.
WHY SHOULD I?
KOBAYASHI, GET OVER TO THE DOCTOR.
I'LL HELP YOU, MARUYAMA.
THOSE WHO ARE SERIOUSLY WOUNDED, USE YOUR GRENADES.
THE ORDER FOR A SUICIDE CHARGE HAS BEEN GIVEN.

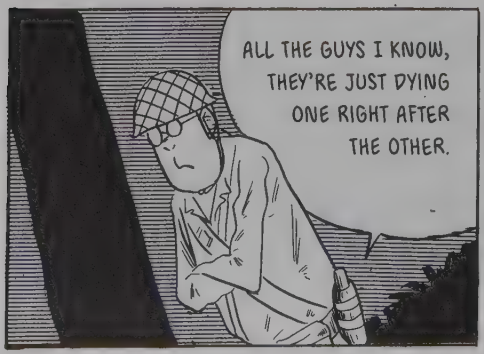






*A CITY IN MIE PREFECTURE IN SOUTHWEST HONSHU.





...
MOOSH
KREE
KREE
CORPORAL KAWAKITA! IS THAT YOU?
AAAAAH.
I'M...
GRIN
YOU'VE LOST A LOT OF WEIGHT!

CAN'T HATE THE HATEFUL ENEMY
FORCED TO SMILE FOR SMUG OFFICERS
WHY AM I STUCK WORKING THIS SHITTY JOB?
HA HA HA!
NO WAY OUT ALL FOR MY COUNTRY

NOBLE DEATH

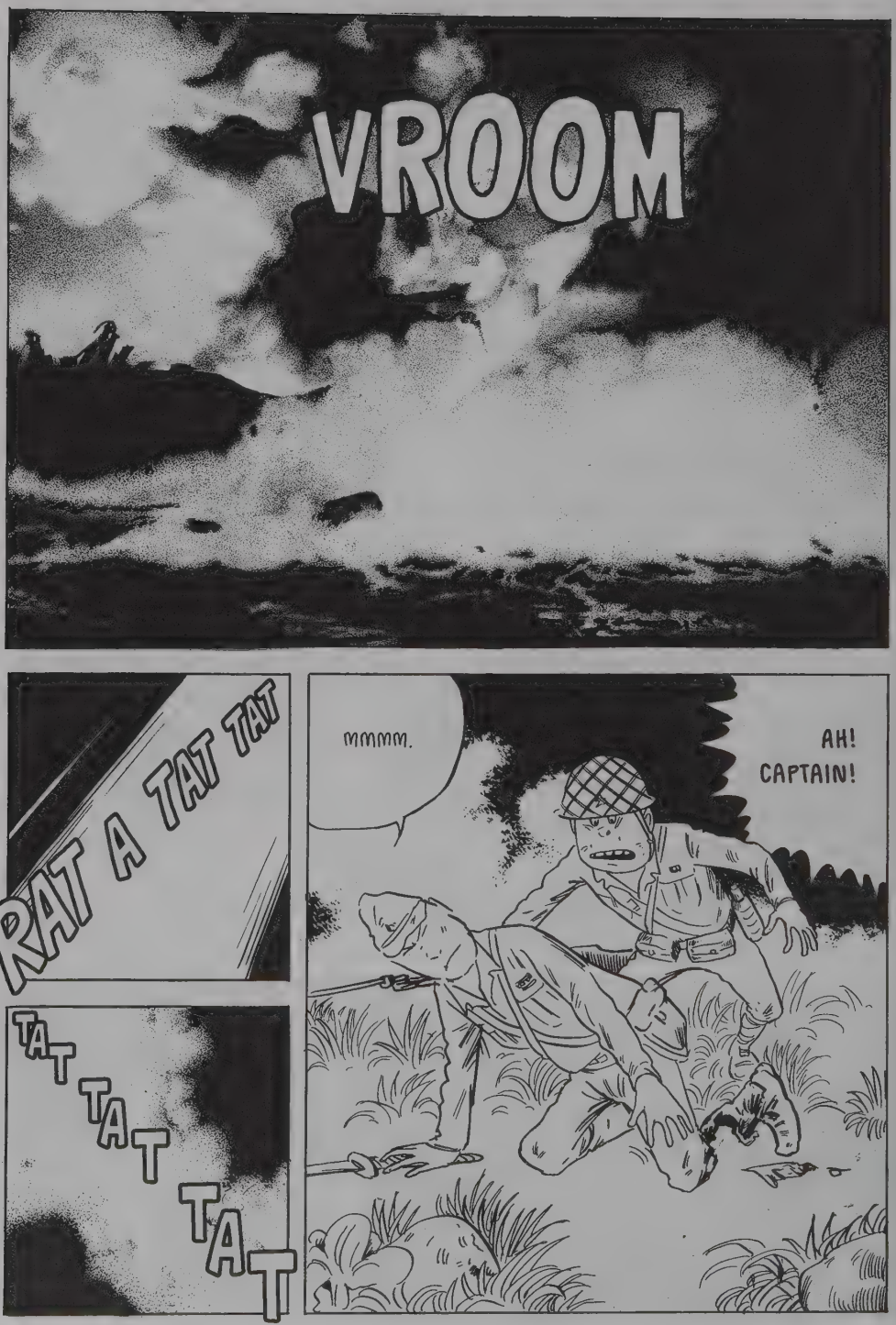
HA HA HA!
DRINK UP!

YEAH, "I'M A BLOSSOM THAT FALLS IN THE RED-LIGHT DISTRICT!"
"WILTING IN THE DAY, BLOOMING AT NIGHT," HUH? HA HA!

WILTING IN THE DAY
BLOOMING AT NIGHT

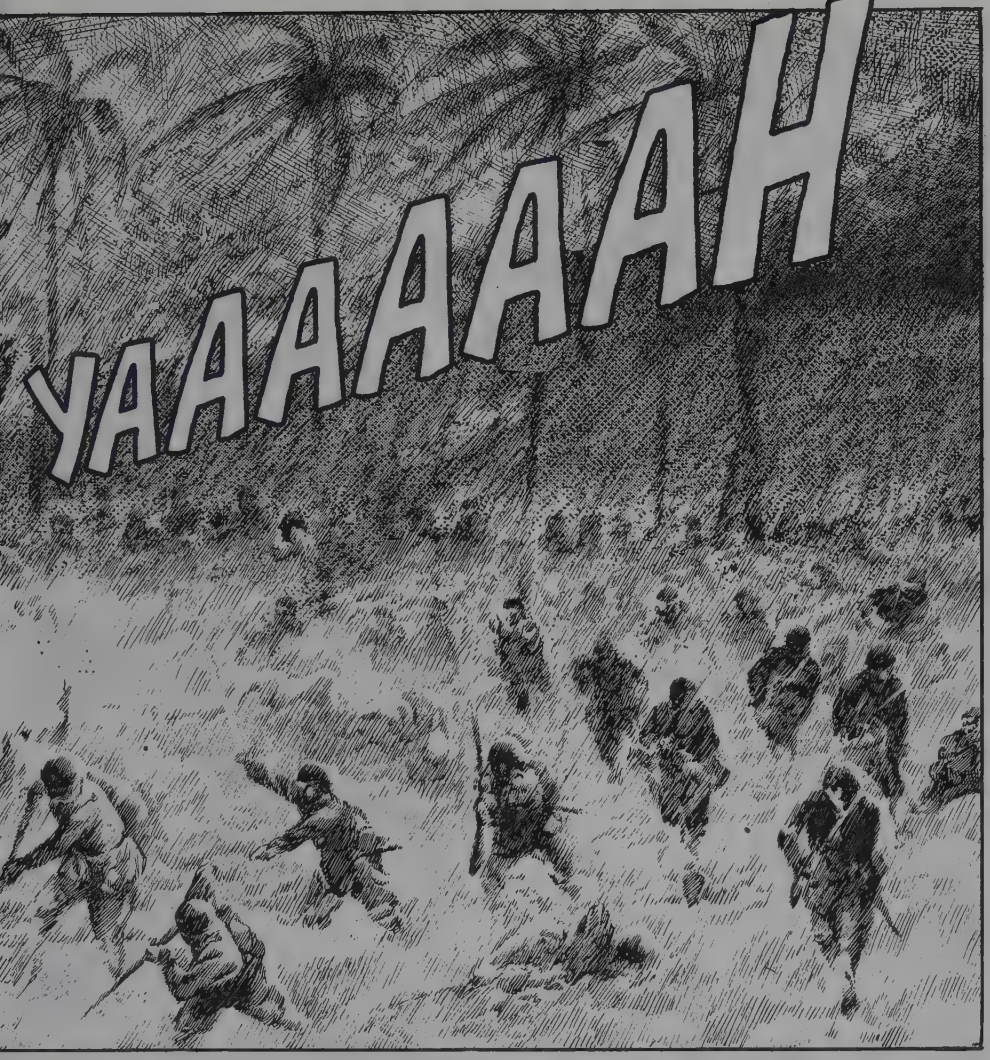
I MYSELF WILL ATTACK FROM THE CENTER TOGETHER WITH THE SECOND COMPANY AND THE FIRST PLATOON.
EACH PLATOON WILL ADVANCE IN THE DIRECTION ORDERED.
FIX BAYON-ETS!
MOVE OUT!

TO THE RIGHT! RIGHT!
LET US TURN NOW TOWARDS OUR BELOVED HOMELAND AND BOW IN FAREWELL.


VROOM
RAT A TAT TAT
TAT TAT TAT
MMMM.
AH! CAPTAIN!

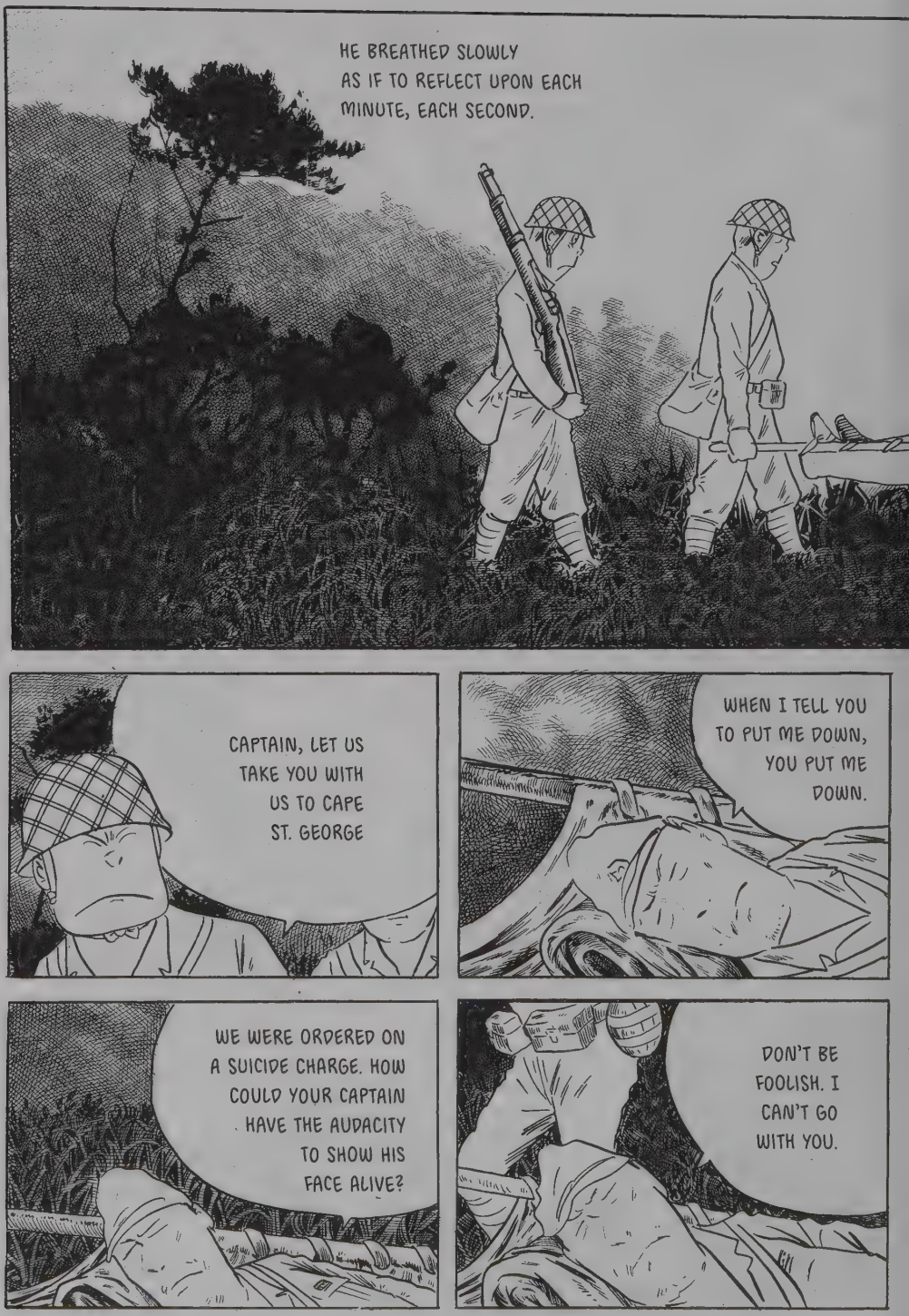
PERHAPS MAJOR TADOKORO,
WHO HAD LIVED HIS LIFE LONGING FOR A GLORIOUS DEATH, FORGOT ABOUT THE MEN UNDER HIM. HE DISAPPEARED QUICKLY INTO THE DEEP DARKNESS, HIS MEN SOON LOSING SIGHT OF HIM. BUT HE WAS DEFINITELY LEADING THE CHARGE.

YAAAH
AUGH-
BLAM BLAM BLAM

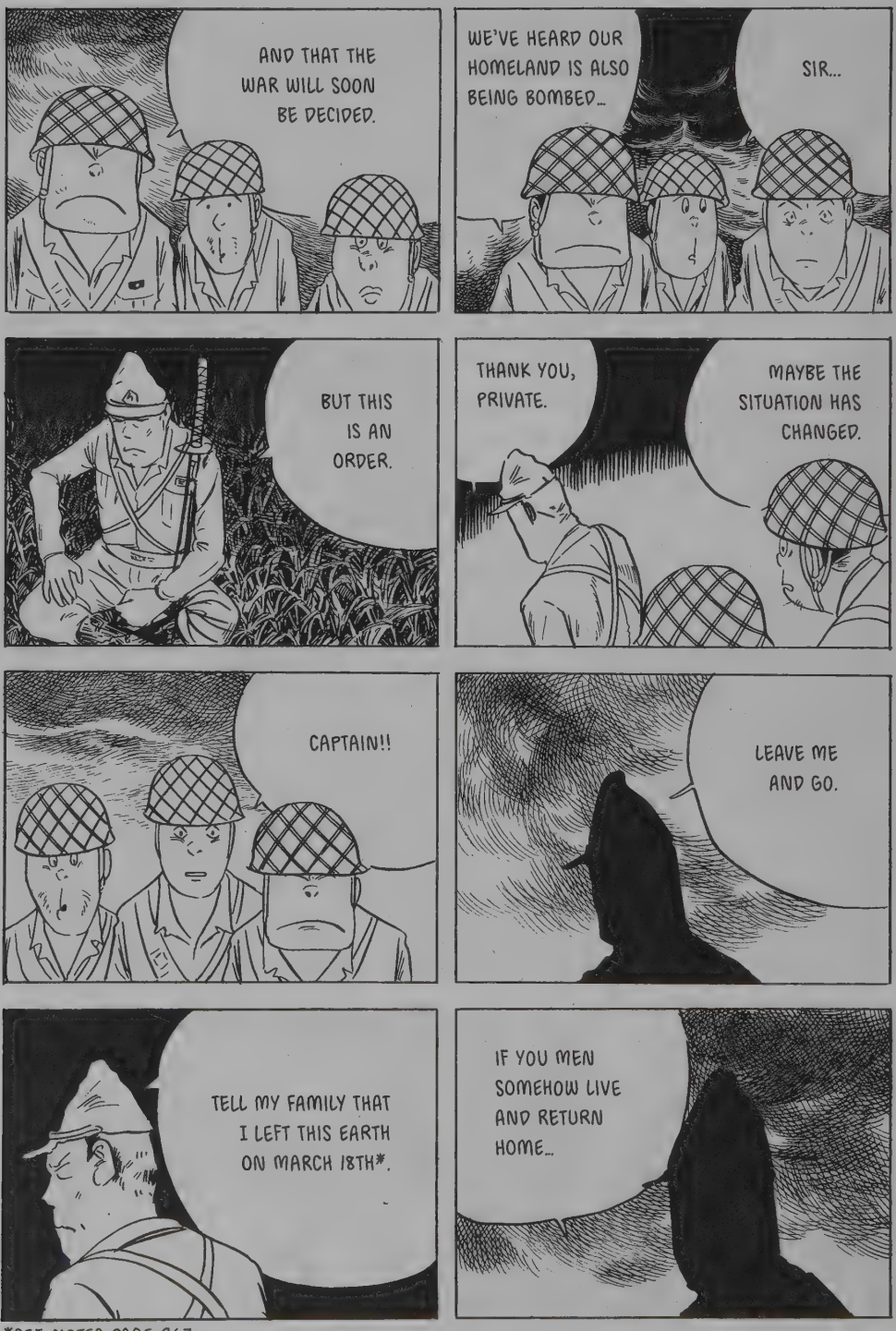

YAAAAAAH

AAGH
YAAH

AROUND THE TIME THE DEEP NIGHT FINALLY SLIPPED OFF IN THE LIGHT, THE CAPTAIN, UNABLE TO MOVE WITH THE WOUND TO HIS LEG, WAS HELPED BY HIS SOLDIERS IN THE DIRECTION OF CAPE ST. GEORGE FROM THE BACKSIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN. HE SHOULD NOT HAVE STILL BEEN ALIVE

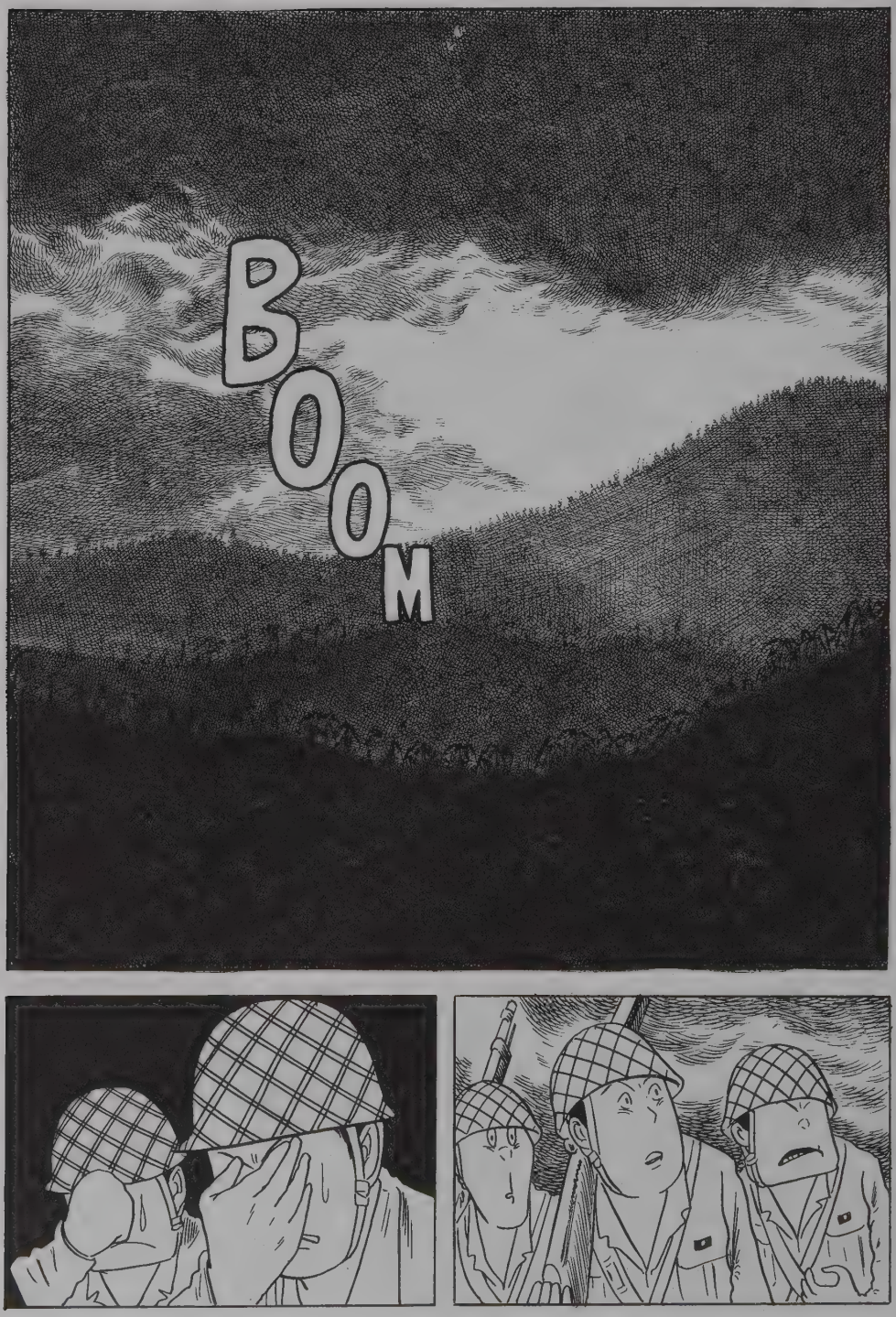

HE BREATHED SLOWLY AS IF TO REFLECT UPON EACH MINUTE, EACH SECOND.
CAPTAIN, LET US TAKE YOU WITH US TO CAPE ST. GEORGE
WHEN I TELL YOU TO PUT ME DOWN, YOU PUT ME DOWN.
WE WERE ORDERED ON A SUICIDE CHARGE. HOW COULD YOUR CAPTAIN HAVE THE AUDACITY TO SHOW HIS FACE ALIVE?
DON'T BE FOOLISH. I CAN'T GO WITH YOU.

BUT THE CAPTAIN WAS ALIVE.
THANK YOU, SIR.
GOOD JOB, MEN.
PUT YOU DOWN, SIR? INJURED LIKE THIS IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE?
THIS IS FAR ENOUGH. PUT ME DOWN.

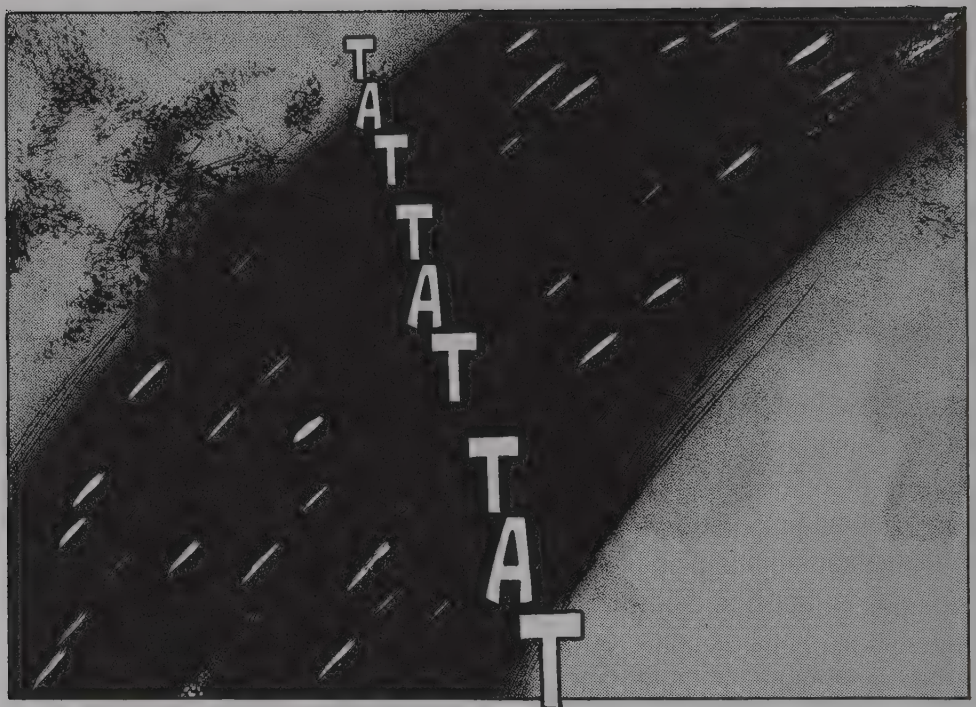

AND THAT THE WAR WILL SOON BE DECIDED.
WE'VE HEARD OUR HOMELAND IS ALSO BEING BOMBED...
SIR...
BUT THIS IS AN ORDER.
THANK YOU, PRIVATE.
MAYBE THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED.
CAPTAIN!!
LEAVE ME AND GO.
TELL MY FAMILY THAT I LEFT THIS EARTH ON MARCH 18TH*.
IF YOU MEN SOMEHOW LIVE AND RETURN HOME...

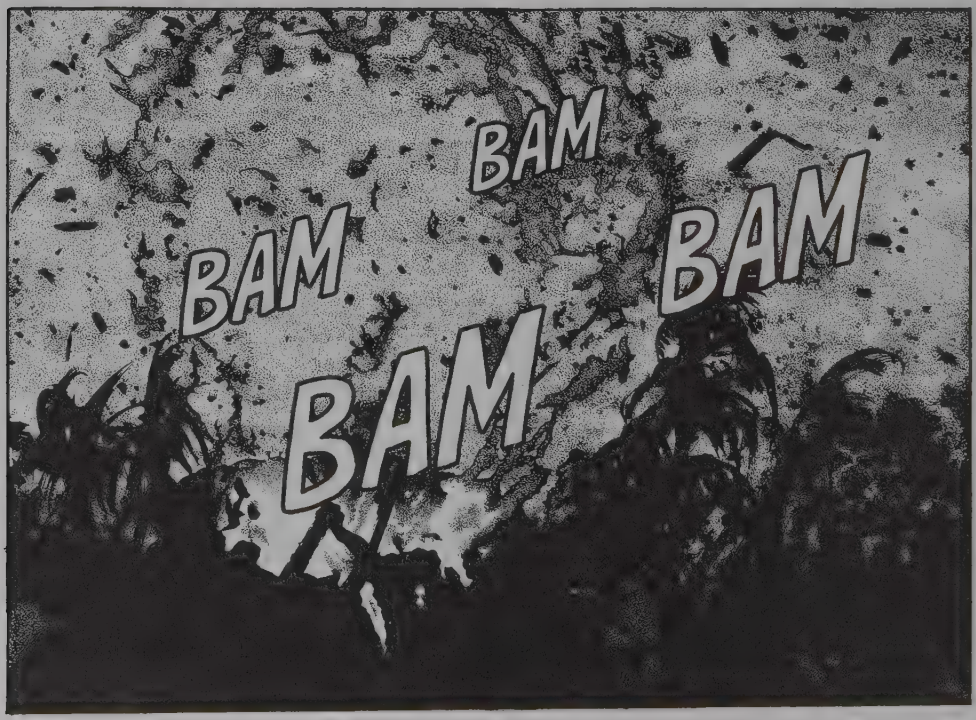
*SEE NOTES PAGE 367.

YOU MEN ARE FINE AS YOU ARE. YOU'RE RETREATING ON MY ORDERS.
UH, WELL... THEN WE—
IT'S IMPOS-SIBLE. PUT ME DOWN.
CAPTAIN, SIR, COME WITH US...
THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE MY LIFE WILL END.
YES, SIR.
THAT'S AN ORDER!
LEAVE ME AND GO.
CAPE ST. GEORGE IS THIS WAY.
SIR, DON'T TALK LIKE THAT!


BOOM

WHEN I TELL YOU TO GO, YOU GO!
DO NOT DISRESPECT MY WISHES.
LET'S MOVE.
ALL RIGHT, GUYS...
YES, SIR.

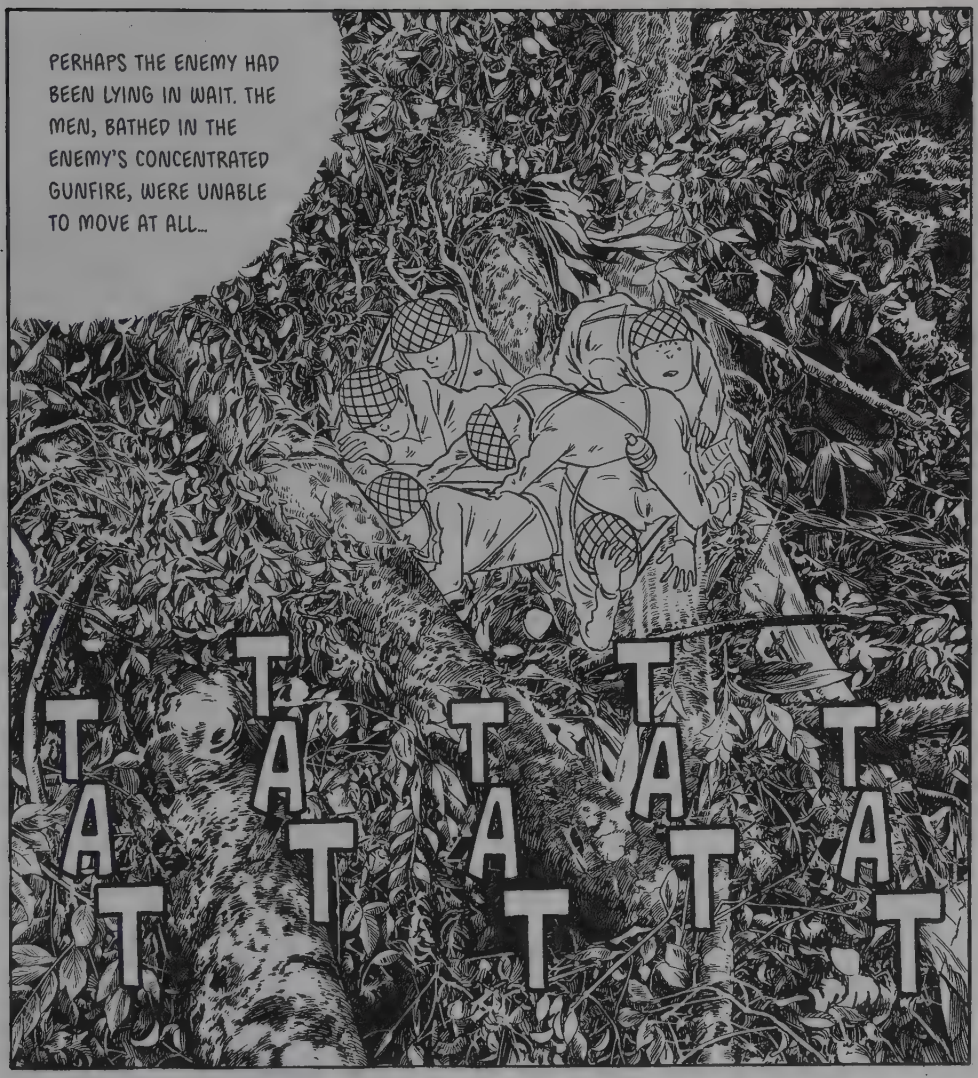

TAT TAT TAT TAT


BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM

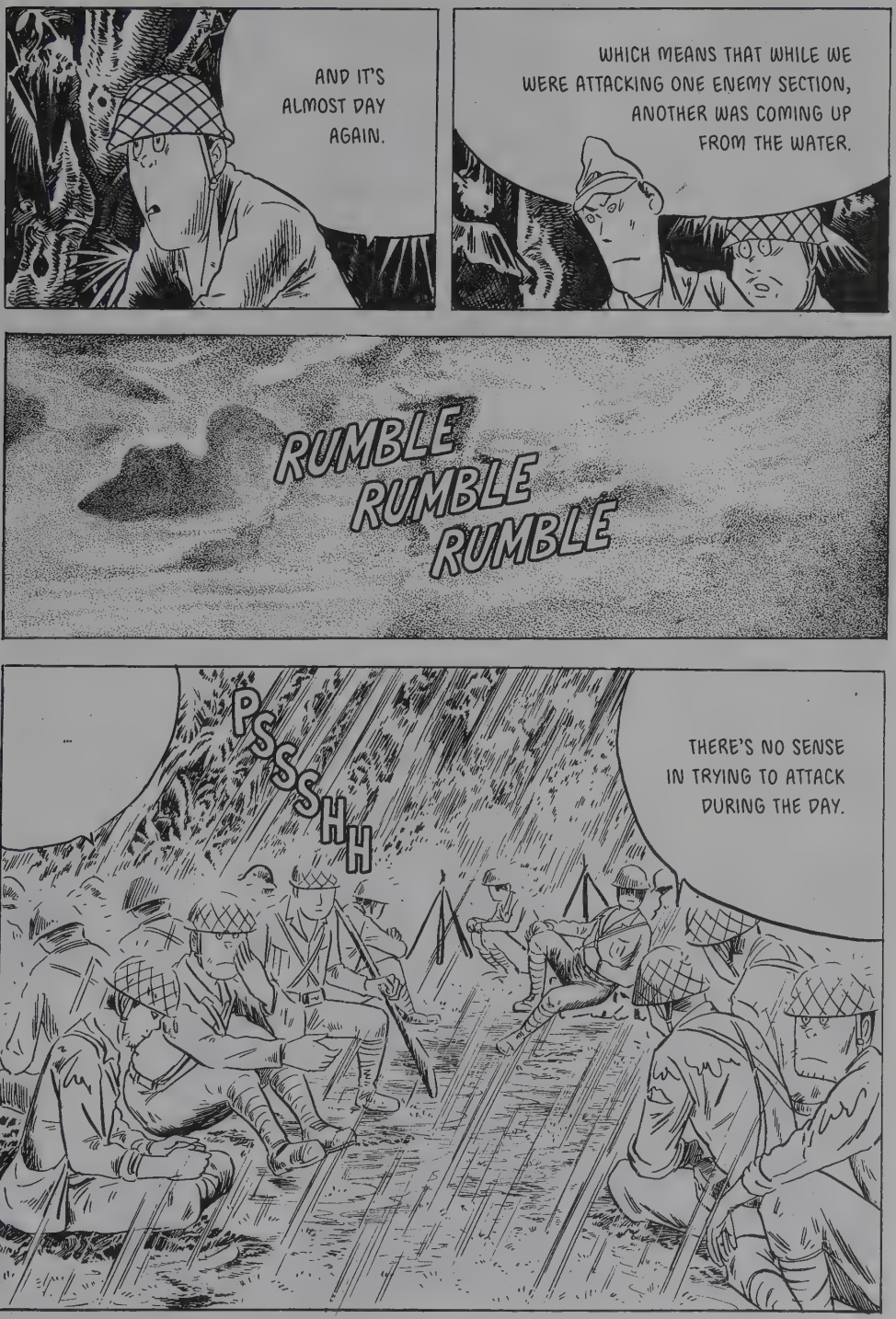
THAT NIGHT

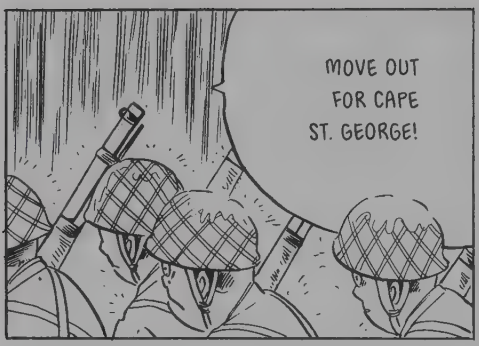
MEANWHILE, THE SECOND PLATOON, HAVING PLUNGED ON IN THE DIRECTION INDICATED BY THE CAPTAIN...

LOOKS THAT WAY.
AAH
THE ENEMY MUST THINK WE'RE THE MAIN FORCE.
ENEMY TENTS RIGHT IN FRONT OF OUR CAMP...
WHAT ARE YOU SQUEALING LIKE THAT FOR?
THAT DOESN'T SURPRISE YOU?

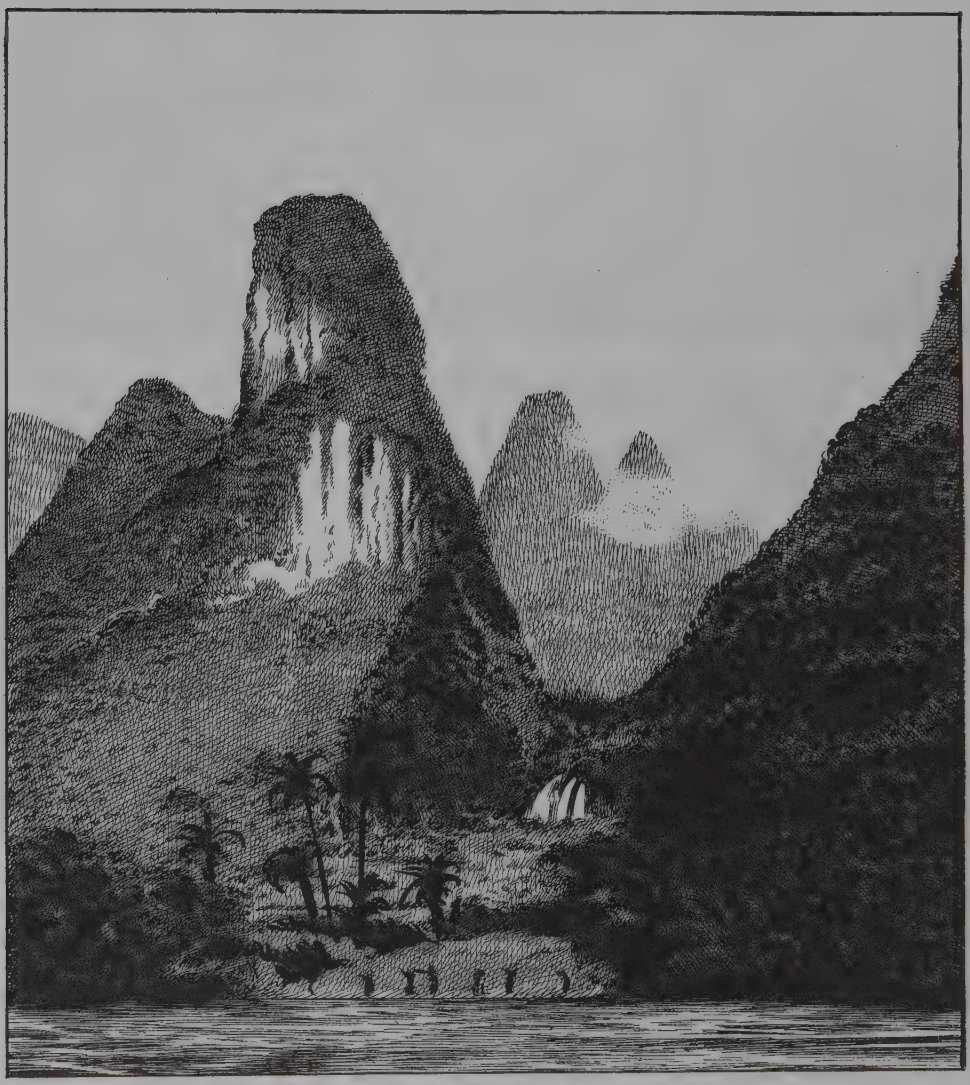

PERHAPS THE ENEMY HAD BEEN LYING IN WAIT. THE MEN, BATHED IN THE ENEMY'S CONCENTRATED GUNFIRE, WERE UNABLE TO MOVE AT ALL...
TATTATTATT

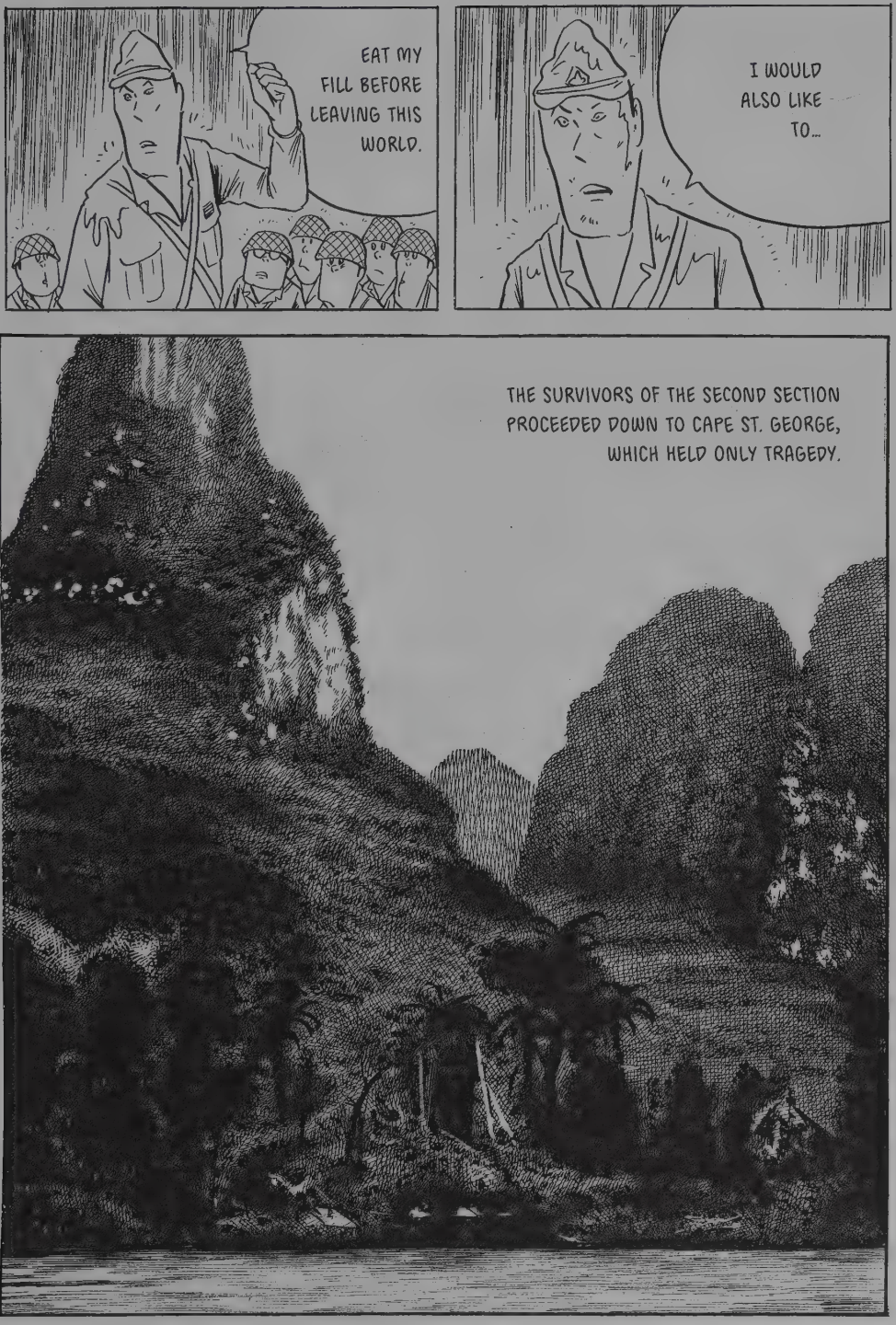
I'M FEVERISH.
I'M FREEZING.
AAAAAH
PSSSSSSHH
PSSSSSSHH
...
HELL, I'M STARVING...
...HMM.
THEN WE CAN MAKE OUR FINAL ATTACK AFTER WE STUFF OURSELVES WITH FOOD.
SIR, WE'D LIKE TO GO DOWN TO CAPE ST. GEORGE TEMPORARILY.

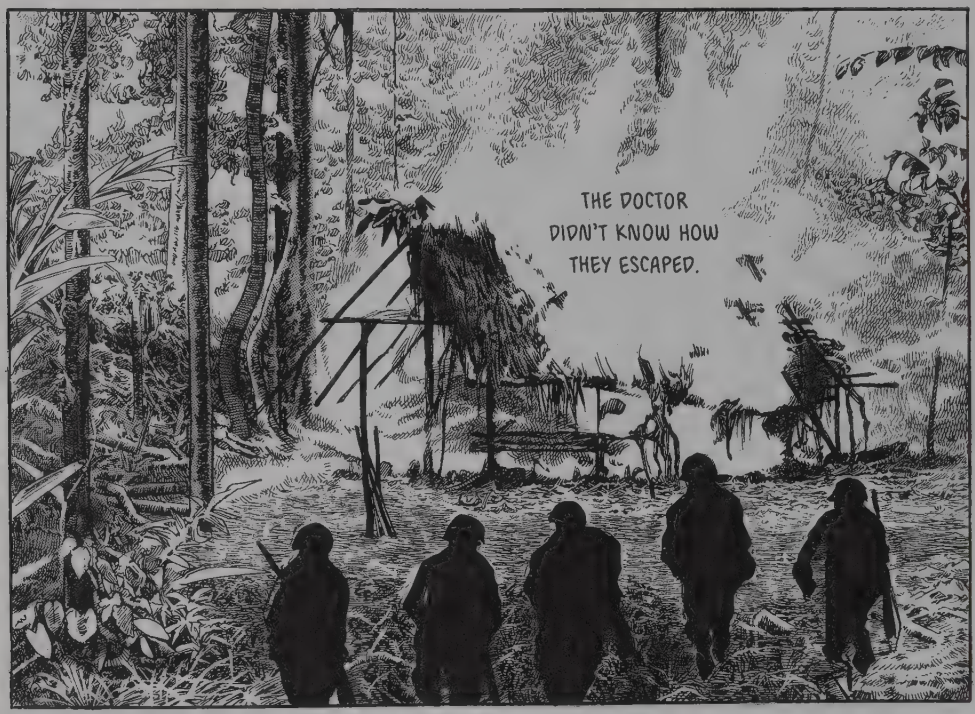

AND IT'S ALMOST DAY AGAIN.
WHICH MEANS THAT WHILE WE WERE ATTACKING ONE ENEMY SECTION, ANOTHER WAS COMING UP FROM THE WATER.
RUMBLE RUMBLE RUMBLE
PSSSHH
THERE'S NO SENSE IN TRYING TO ATTACK DURING THE DAY.

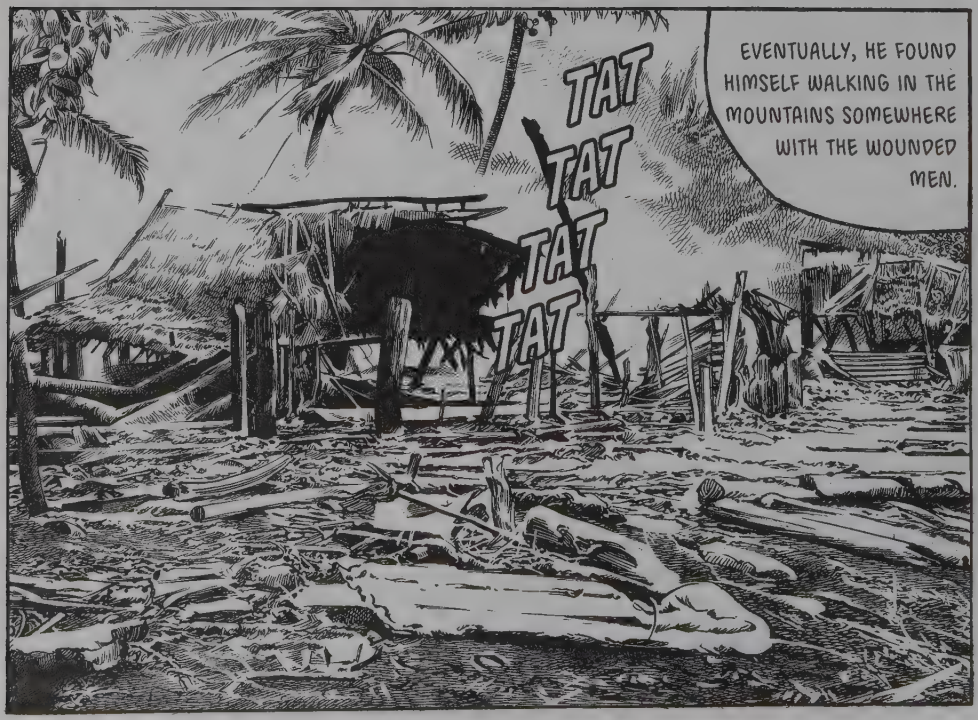

MOVE OUT FOR CAPE ST. GEORGE!

WE WILL TEMPORARILY RETREAT TO CAPE ST. GEORGE, AND THEN RELAUNCH OUR ATTACK.



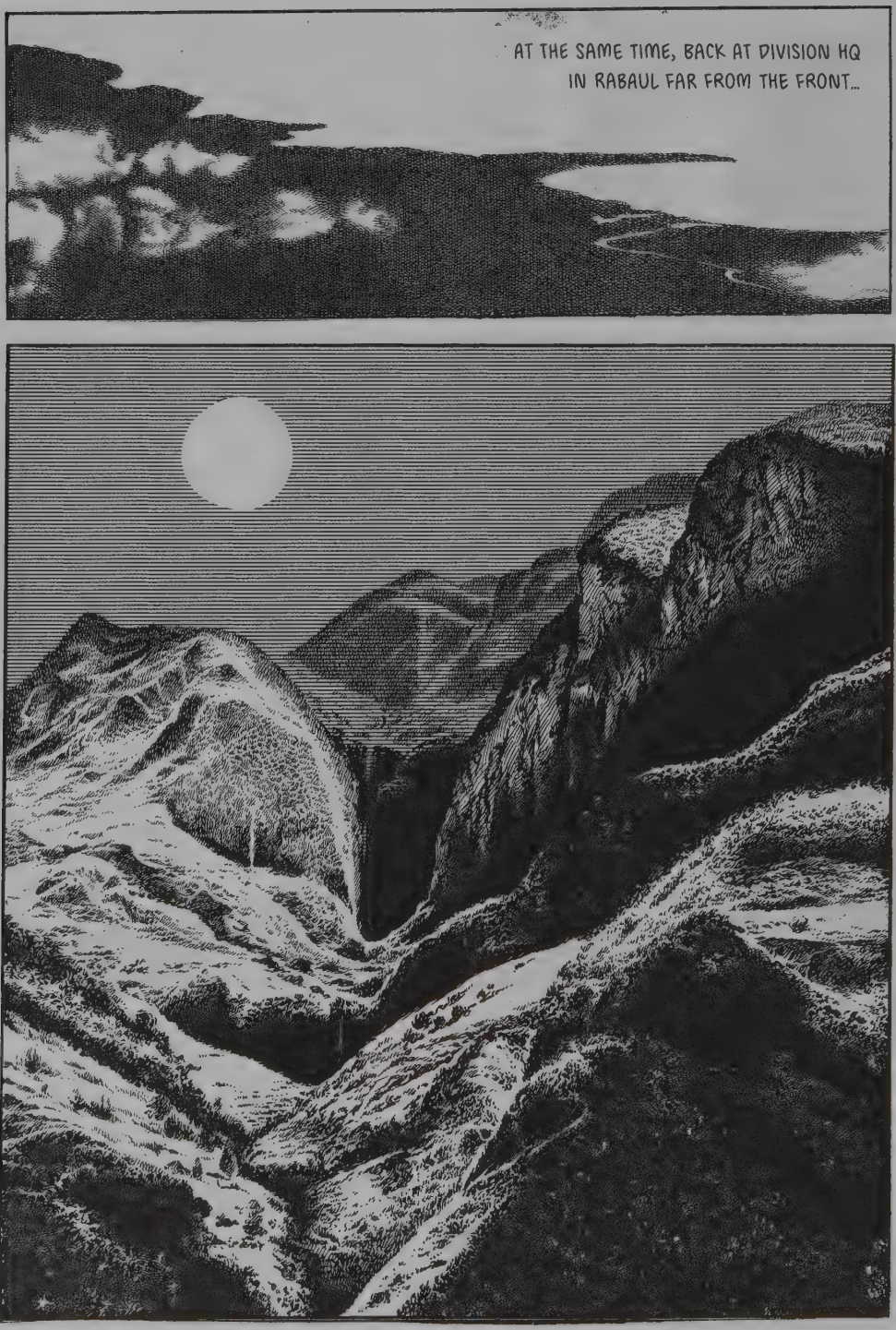

EAT MY FILL BEFORE LEAVING THIS WORLD.
I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO...
THE SURVIVORS OF THE SECOND SECTION PROCEEDED DOWN TO CAPE ST. GEORGE, WHICH HELD ONLY TRAGEDY.

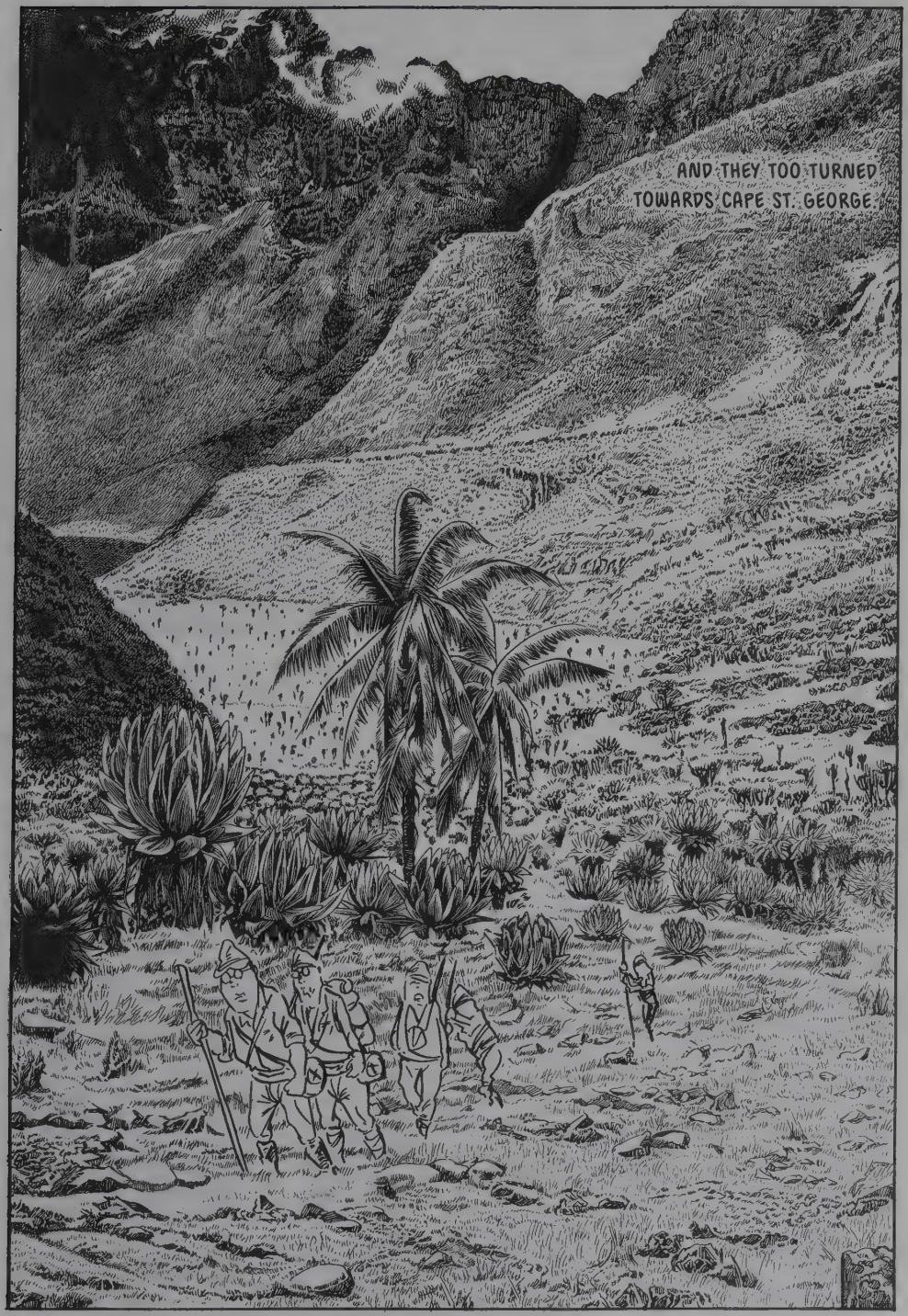

THE DOCTOR DIDN'T KNOW HOW THEY ESCAPED.


TAT
TAT
TAT
TAT
EVENTUALLY, HE FOUND HIMSELF WALKING IN THE MOUNTAINS SOMEWHERE WITH THE WOUNDED MEN.

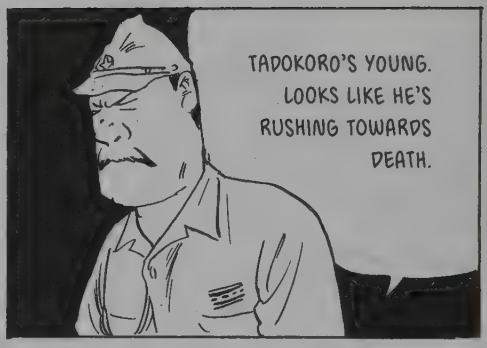
TAT TAT TAT TAT
BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM
THE NIGHT OF THE SUICIDE CHARGE, THE DOCTOR WAS ALSO ATTACKED BY A DIFFERENT ENEMY SECTION.

MM HMM.
BAM BAM BA BA BA
DOCTOR, THE ENEMY'S ATTACKING!


AT THE SAME TIME, BACK AT DIVISION HQ
IN RABAUL FAR FROM THE FRONT...


AND THEY TOO TURNED
TOWARDS CAPE ST. GEORGE.

IT WOULD APPEAR SO, SIR.


TADOKORO'S YOUNG. LOOKS LIKE HE'S RUSHING TOWARDS DEATH.

SAY NOT TO RUSH INTO A SUICIDE CHARGE.

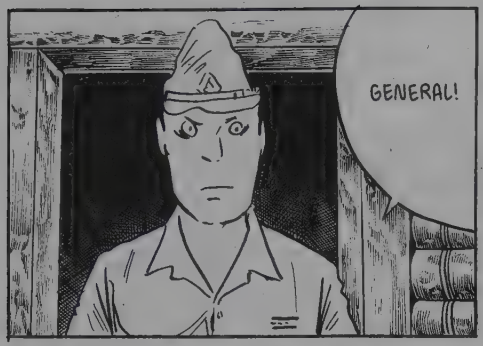
SEND A REPLY TO KEEP THAT CAMP ACTIVE AND FIGHT TO THE END...

KLAK KLAK

YES, SIR.

...

KLAK KLAK


GENERAL!

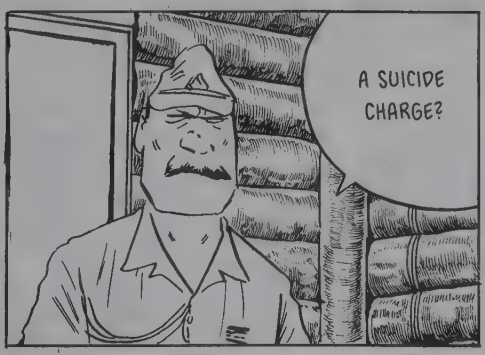
WHAT DOES IT SAY?
HMM.

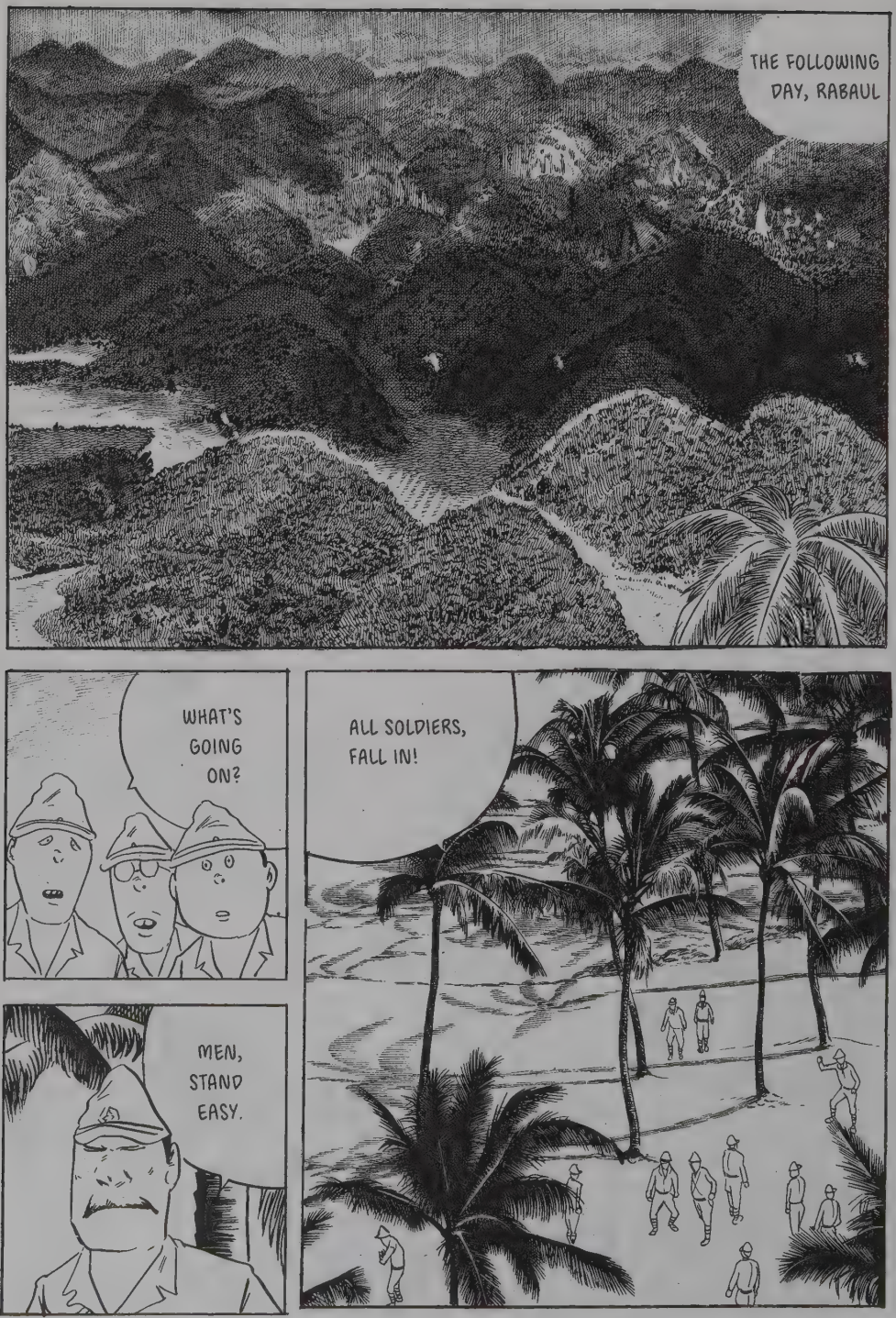
THERE'S A TELEGRAM FROM BAIEN.

"WE PRAY FOR THE GLORIOUS VICTORY OF RABAUL. MARCH 17TH, MAJOR TADOKORO."

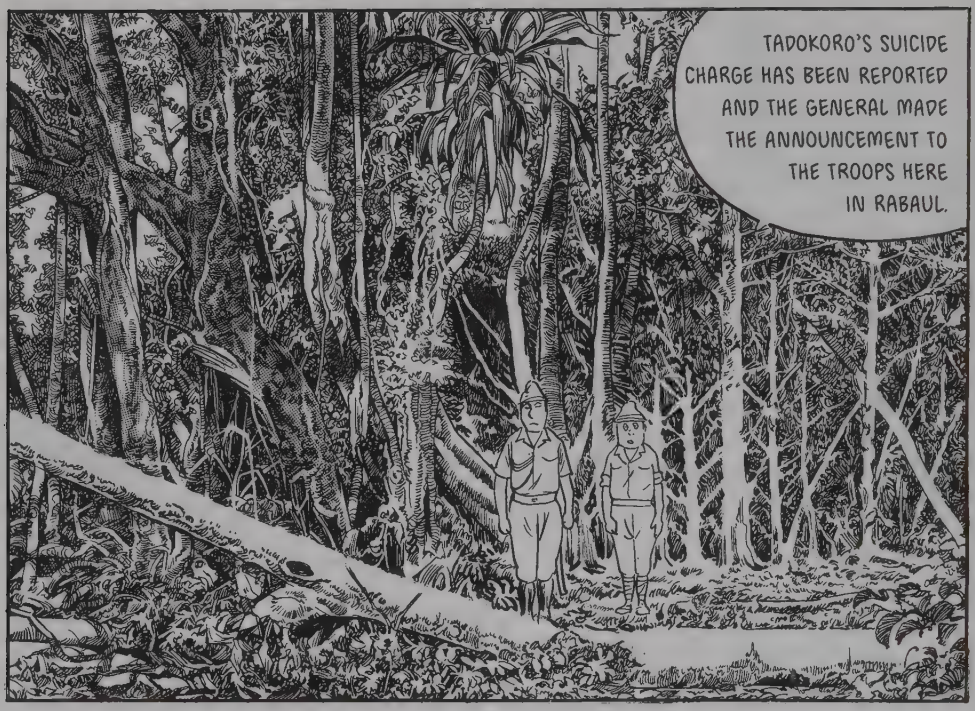
"I WILL LEAD MY BATTALION INTO A SUICIDE CHARGE TONIGHT."

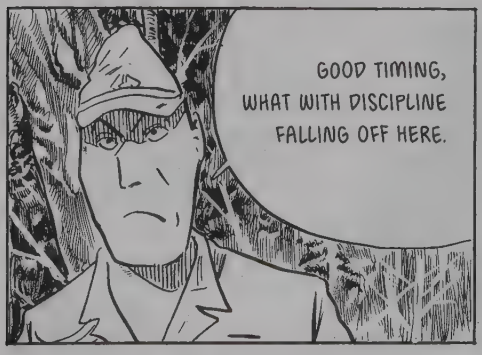
THAT GROUP SHOULD STILL BE ABLE TO FIGHT.
FROM THE INFORMATION WE'VE RECEIVED THUS FAR...


A SUICIDE CHARGE?


THE FOLLOWING DAY, RABAUL
WHAT'S GOING ON?
ALL SOLDIERS, FALL IN!
MEN, STAND EASY.

WHAT?
SIR, BAIEN'S NOT RESPONDING.
DEAD?!
THEY'RE PROBABLY ALREADY DEAD.

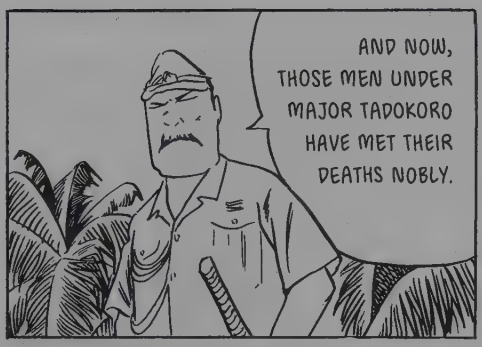

TADOKORO'S SUICIDE CHARGE HAS BEEN REPORTED AND THE GENERAL MADE THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE TROOPS HERE IN RABAUL.

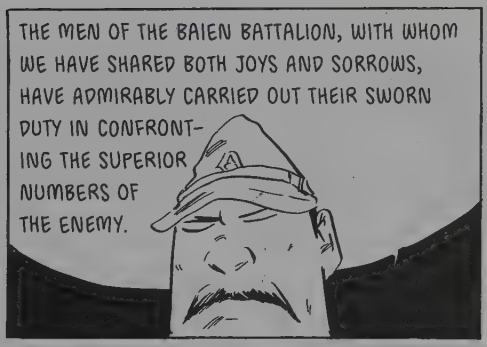

GOOD TIMING, WHAT WITH DISCIPLINE FALLING OFF HERE.

THE NEWS OF THEIR DEATH HAS SADDENED EVERYONE.

WHAT HAPPENED NOW?

SIR, THE GENERAL WANTS TO SEE YOU.
SIR!


AND NOW, THOSE MEN UNDER MAJOR TADOKORO HAVE MET THEIR DEATHS NOBLY.


THE MEN OF THE BAIEN BATTALION, WITH WHOM WE HAVE SHARED BOTH JOYS AND SORROWS, HAVE ADMIRABLY CARRIED OUT THEIR SWORN DUTY IN CONFRONTING THE SUPERIOR NUMBERS OF THE ENEMY.

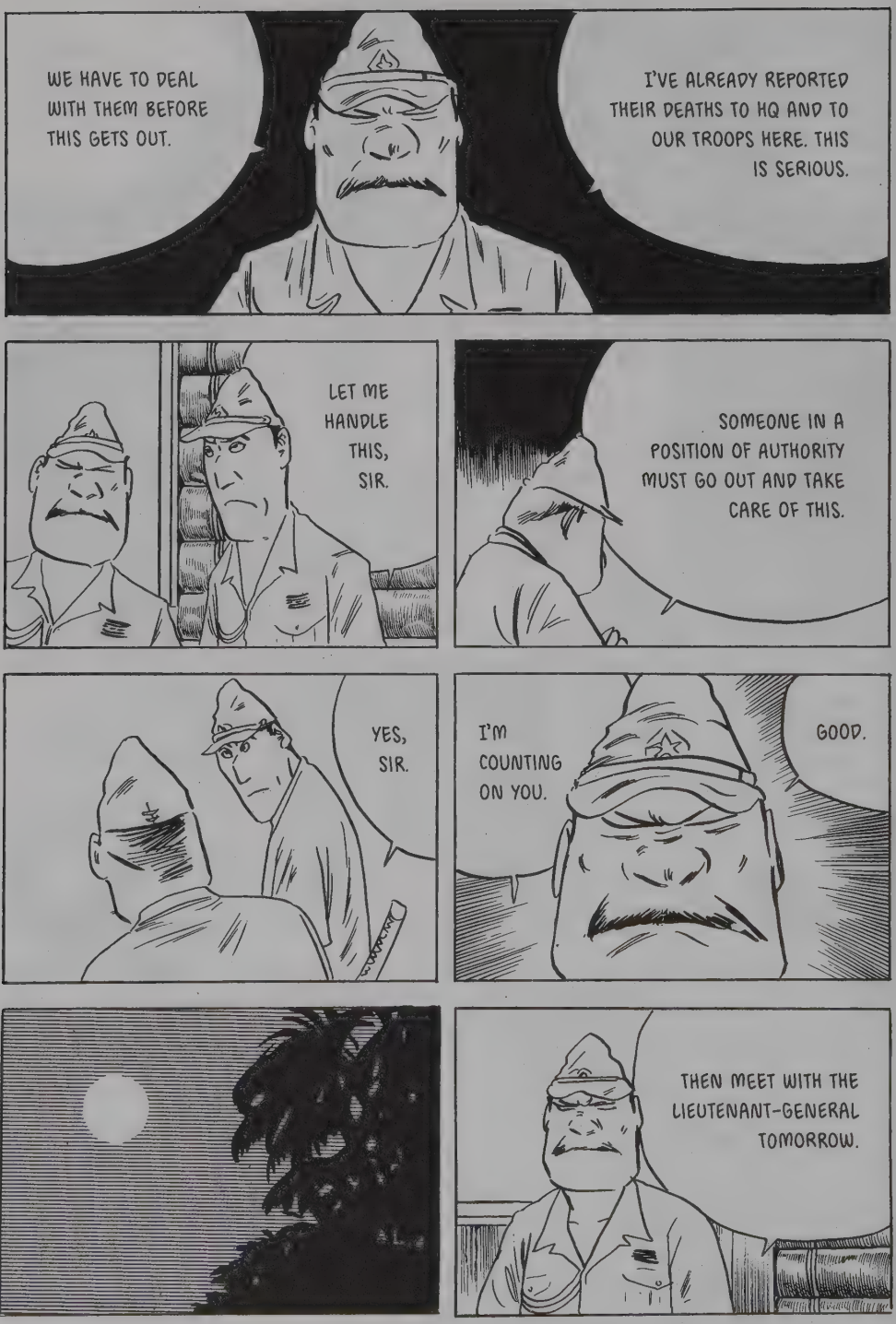
HALF BOW TO THE LEFT! LEFT!

I'D LIKE TO HAVE A MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER FOR THESE BRAVE MEN.

PRAY!!

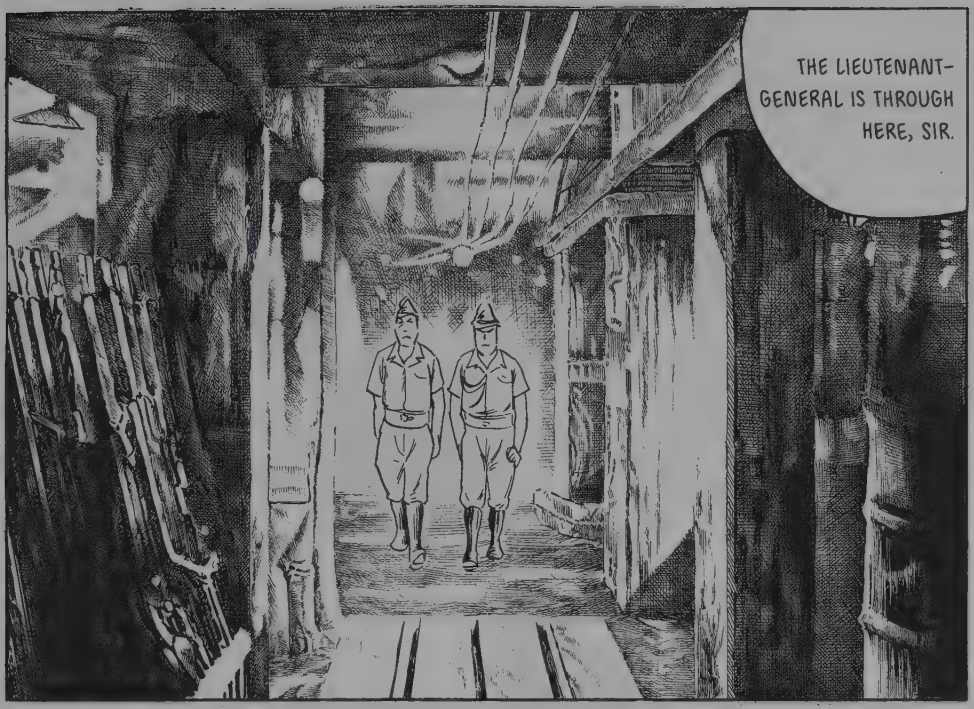
HATS OFF!

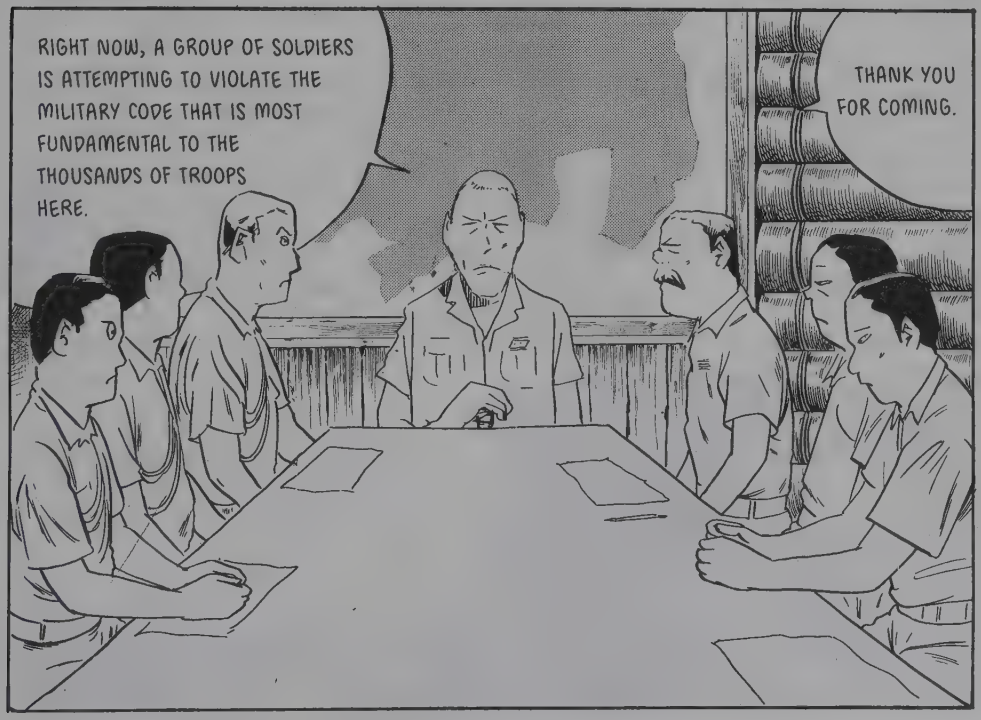
FALL OUT!
HALF BOW TO THE RIGHT! RIGHT!


WE HAVE TO DEAL WITH THEM BEFORE THIS GETS OUT.
I'VE ALREADY REPORTED THEIR DEATHS TO HQ AND TO OUR TROOPS HERE. THIS IS SERIOUS.
LET ME HANDLE THIS, SIR.
SOMEONE IN A POSITION OF AUTHORITY MUST GO OUT AND TAKE CARE OF THIS.
YES, SIR.
I'M COUNTING ON YOU.
GOOD.
THEN MEET WITH THE LIEUTENANT-GENERAL TOMORROW.

THE BAIEN MEN ARE NOT DEAD.
YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, SIR?
LOOK AT THIS. IT'S A TOP-SECRET TELEGRAM FROM THE POLICE IN CAPE ST. GEORGE.
WHAT?!
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?
"THEY SHOW NO SIGN OF MOVING OUT SOON."
"WE ARE PROVIDING RATIONS TO BAIEN SURVIVORS, INCLUDING OFFICERS, AT THE CAPE ST. GEORGE WATCH STATION."
DESERTION IN THE FACE OF THE ENEMY!!
THEY'LL DISGRACE ALL OF US HERE IN RABAUL!

REGARDLESS OF THE SACRIFICES.
ABOVE ALL ELSE, THE ORDER FOR A SUICIDE CHARGE MUST BE OBEYED...
THIS MISSION IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT...
IF NOT, THE MENTAL FOUNDATION NEEDED FOR A DECISIVE VICTORY FOR RABAUL WILL CRUMBLE.
YES, SIR. WE ARE AWARE OF THE CONSEQUENCES.
AND ALSO VERY DIFFICULT.
YES, SIR.
ONCE THERE, YOU MAY USE WHATEVER MEANS NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE.

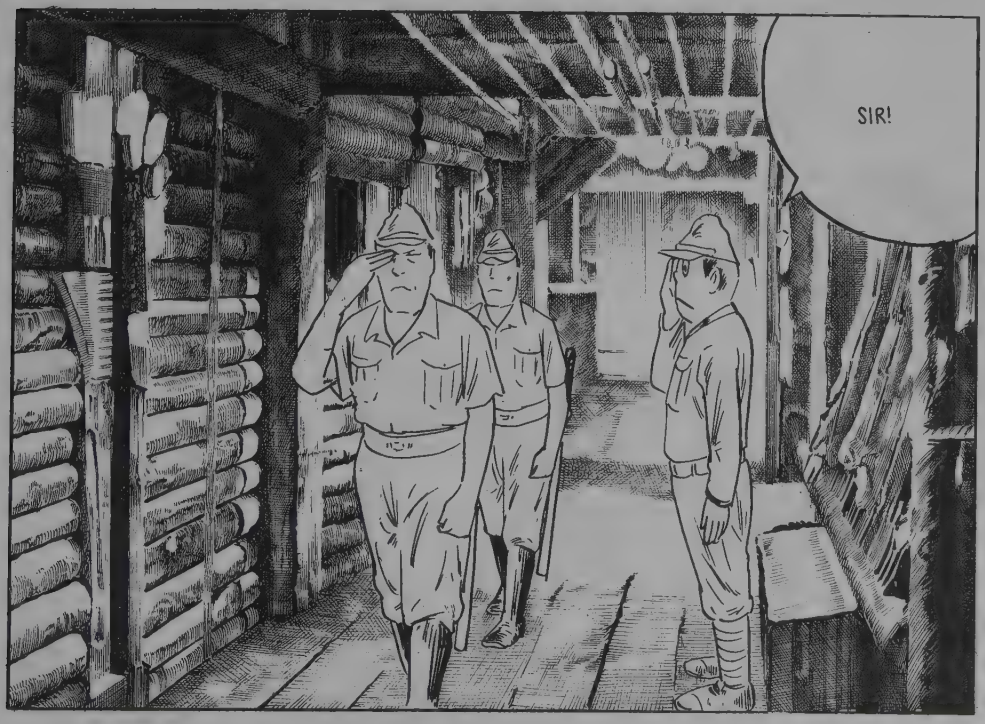

THE LIEUTENANT-GENERAL IS THROUGH HERE, SIR.

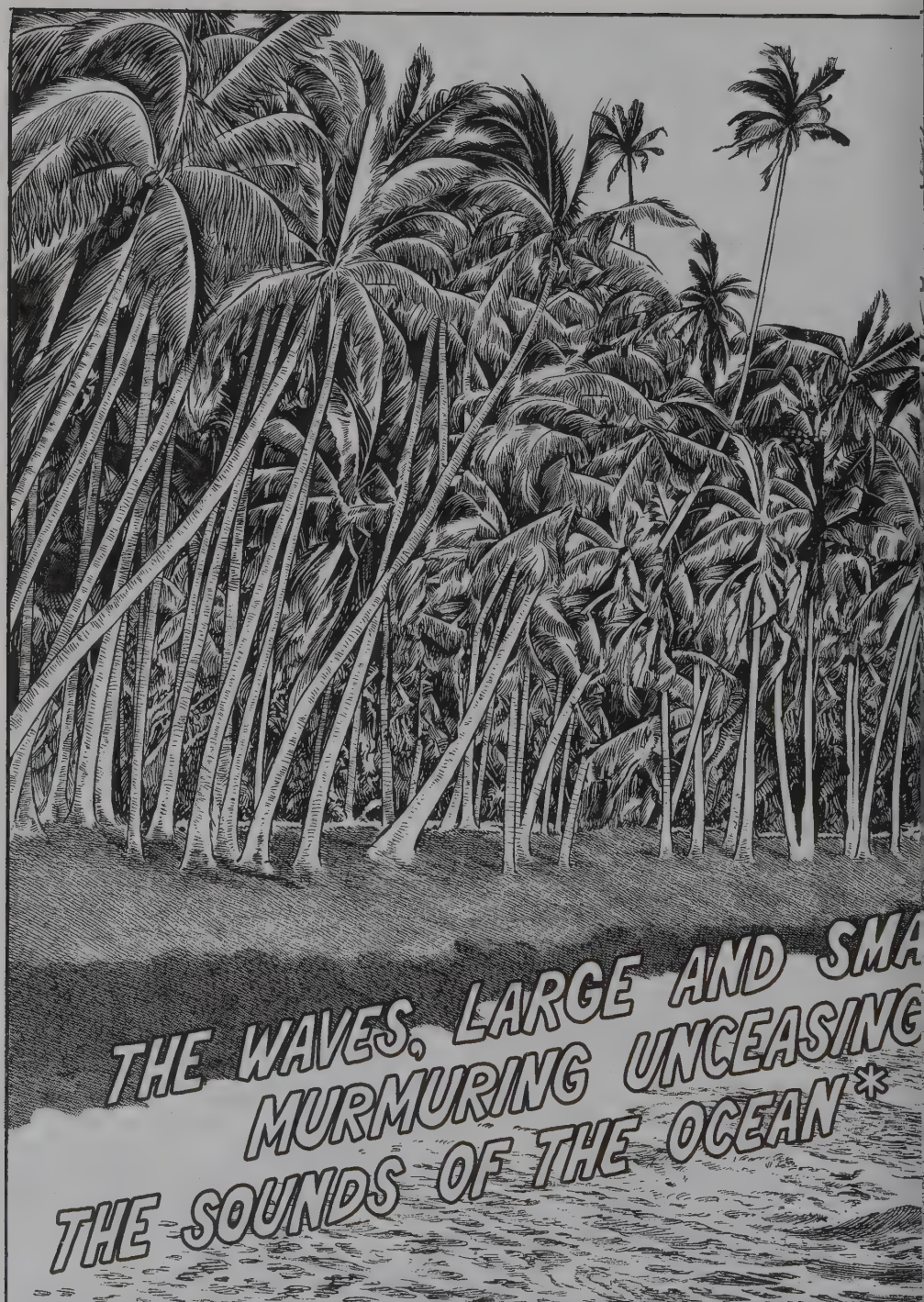

RIGHT NOW, A GROUP OF SOLDIERS IS ATTEMPTING TO VIOLATE THE MILITARY CODE THAT IS MOST FUNDAMENTAL TO THE THOUSANDS OF TROOPS HERE.
THANK YOU FOR COMING.

CAPE ST. GEORGE

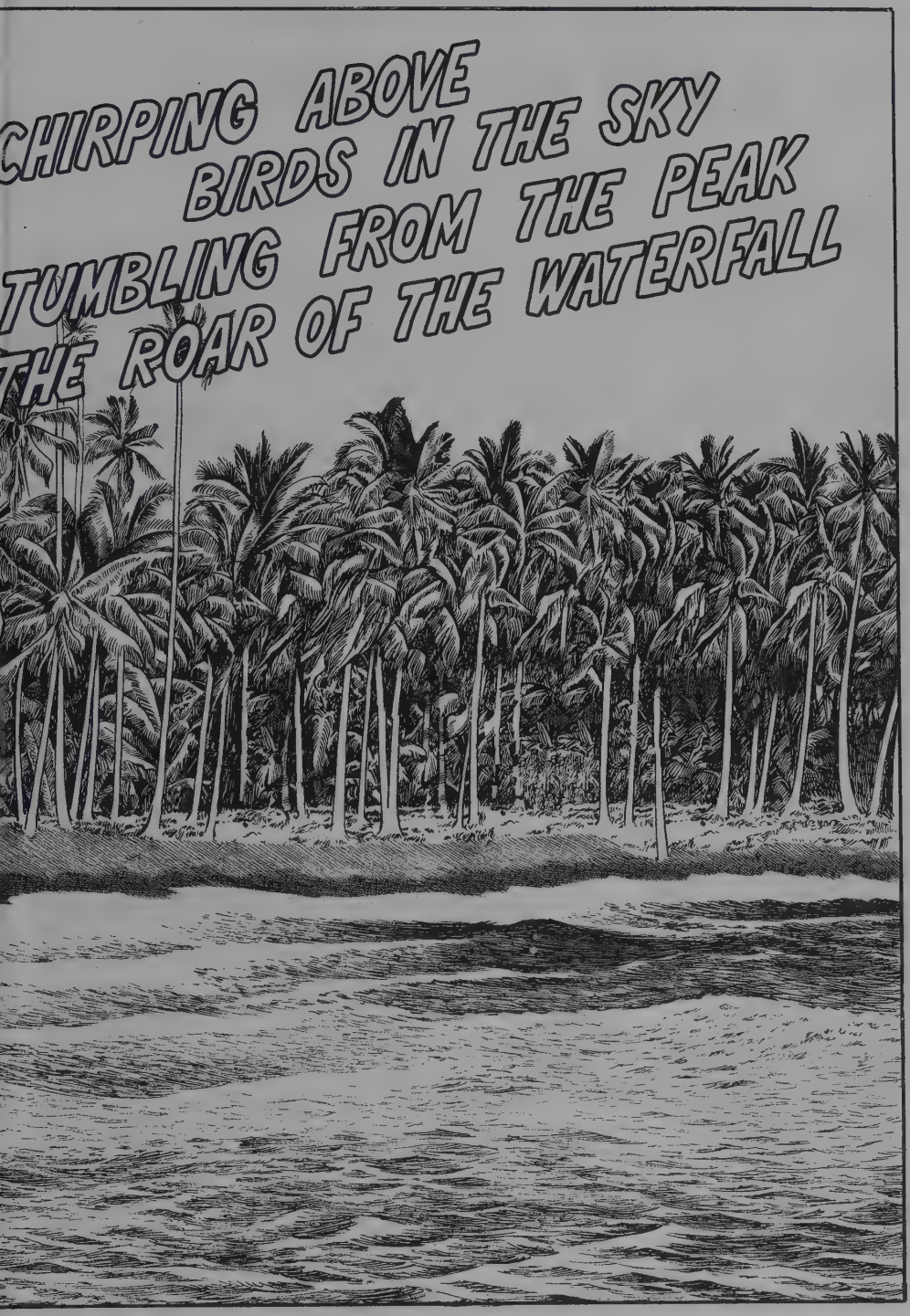
I ASSIGN TO YOU ALL POWERS OF THE LAW.
AS THE HEAD OF THESE FORCES...

YES, SIR!


SIR!



*SET TO A WALTZ TEMPO, "UTSUKUSHI TENNEN (BEAUTIFUL NATURE)" WAS WRITTEN FOR HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS

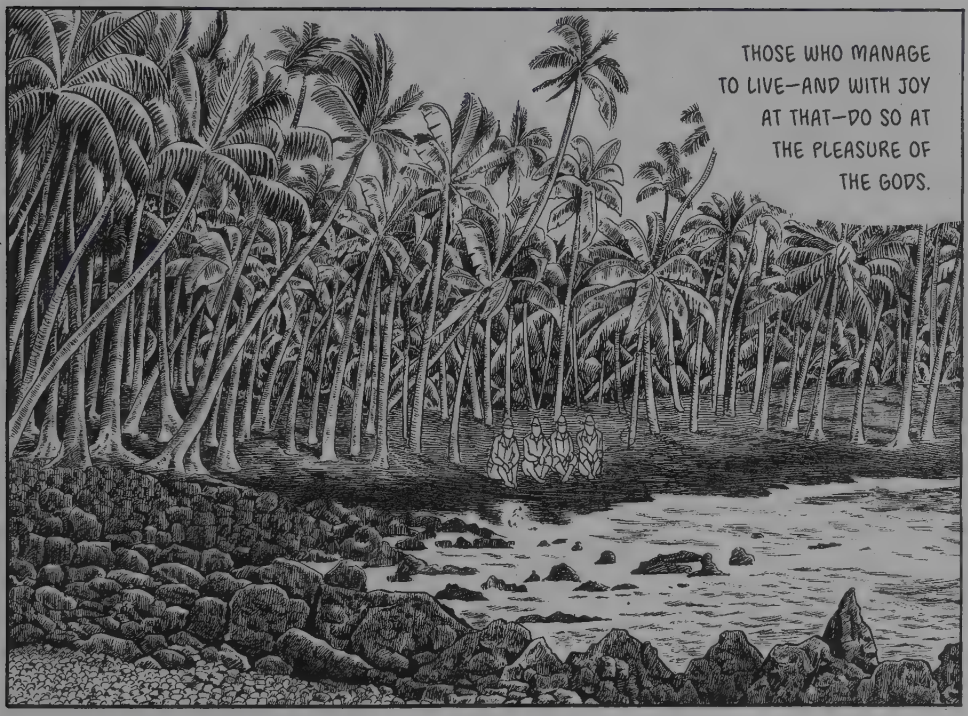

CHIRPING ABOVE
BIRDS IN THE SKY
TUMBLING FROM THE PEAK
THE ROAR OF THE WATERFALL

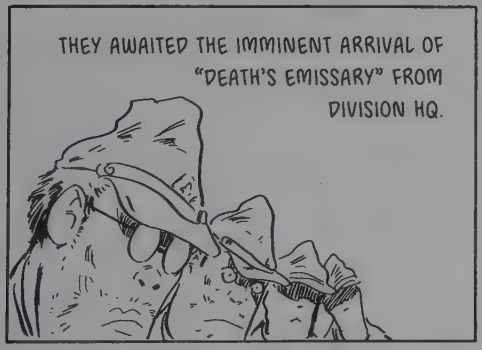
RESPECT
THE GREAT VOICES OF THE GOD
ETERNAL AND FREE

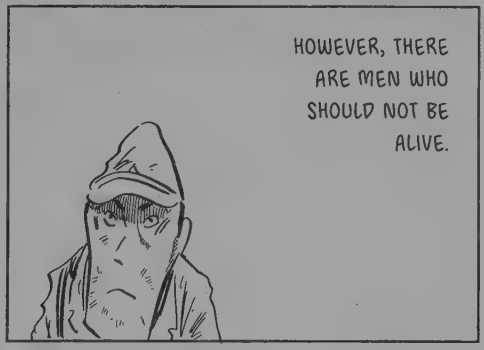
LISTEN, PEOPLE
THE DELIGHT
OF THIS MUSIC OF NATURE

THE SOLDIERS RUBBED THEIR HANDS AND STOMPED ON THE EARTH AND PICKED THEIR NOSES, AS IF THEY FOUND IT STRANGE TO BE ALIVE.

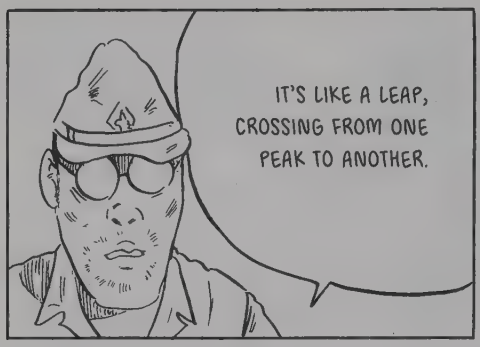
PSSH
PSSH
PSSH

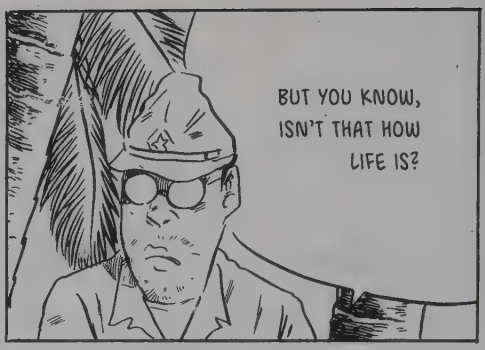

THOSE WHO MANAGE TO LIVE—AND WITH JOY AT THAT—DO SO AT THE PLEASURE OF THE GODS.

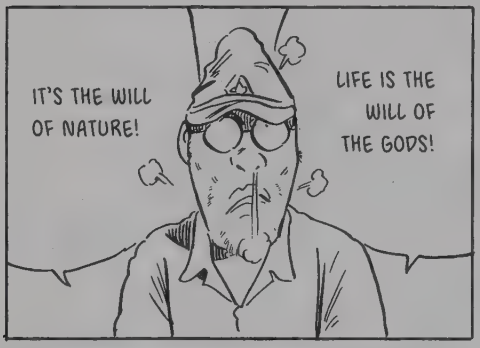

THEY AWAITED THE IMMINENT ARRIVAL OF "DEATH'S EMISSARY" FROM DIVISION HQ.

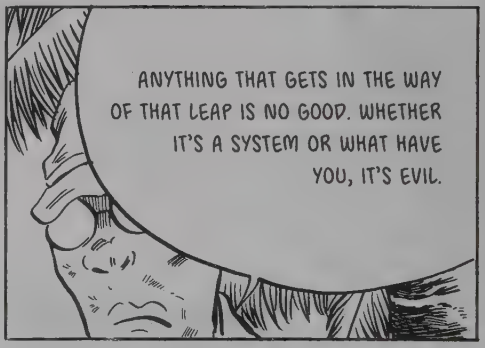

HOWEVER, THERE ARE MEN WHO SHOULD NOT BE ALIVE.

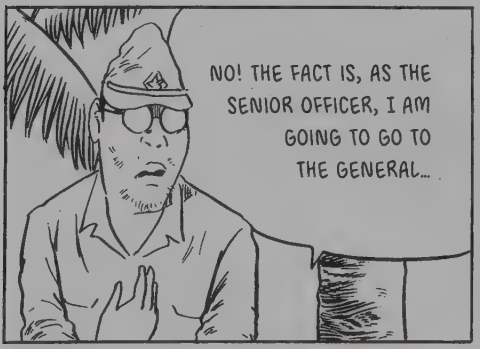
THE OFFICERS, WHO HAD THE GREATEST RESPONSIBILITY, STARED LISTLESSLY OUT AT THE OCEAN.


IT'S LIKE A LEAP, CROSSING FROM ONE PEAK TO ANOTHER.

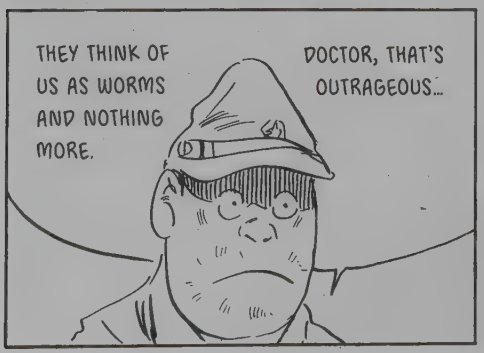

BUT YOU KNOW, ISN'T THAT HOW LIFE IS?

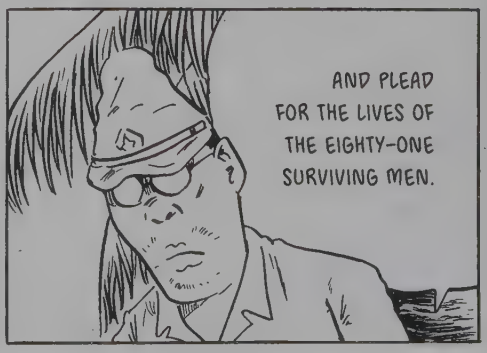

IT'S THE WILL OF NATURE!
LIFE IS THE WILL OF THE GODS!

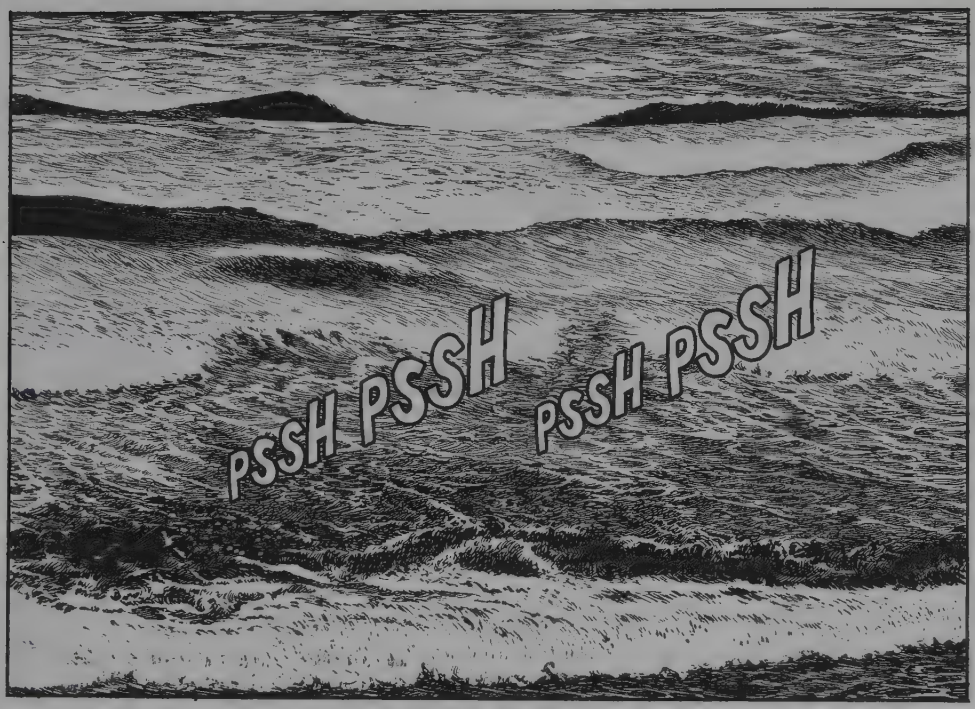

ANYTHING THAT GETS IN THE WAY OF THAT LEAP IS NO GOOD. WHETHER IT'S A SYSTEM OR WHAT HAVE YOU, IT'S EVIL.


NO! THE FACT IS, AS THE SENIOR OFFICER, I AM GOING TO GO TO THE GENERAL...

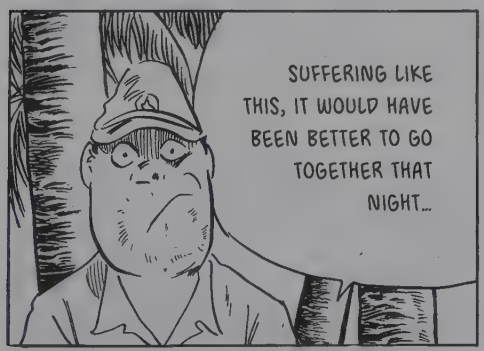
DON'T GET SO WORKED UP.
DOCTOR!

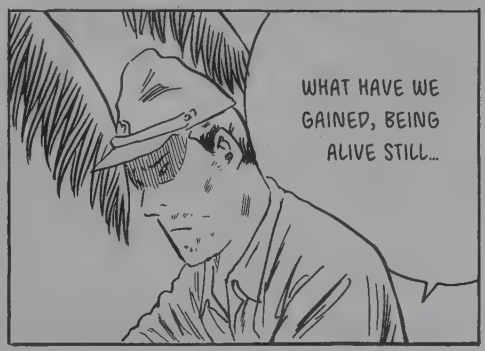

THEY THINK OF US AS WORMS AND NOTHING MORE.
DOCTOR, THAT'S OUTRAGEOUS...

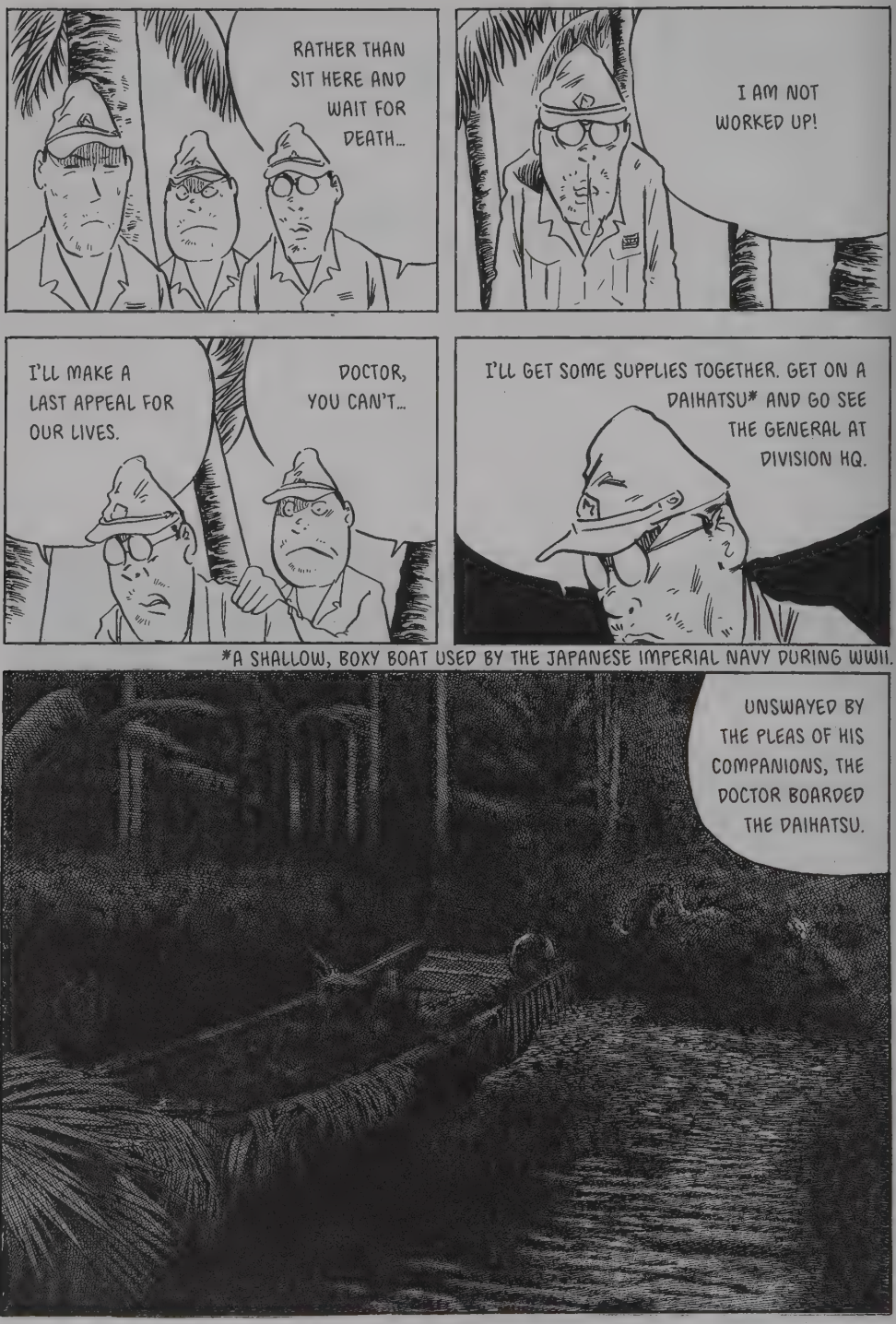

AND PLEAD FOR THE LIVES OF THE EIGHTY-ONE SURVIVING MEN.


PSSH PSSH
PSSH PSSH

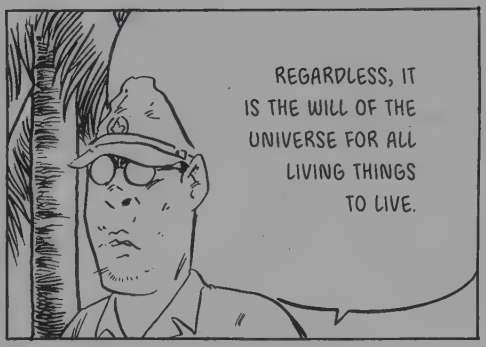
THE COMMISSIONED OFFICERS WERE STILL STARING OUT AT THE SEA...


SUFFERING LIKE THIS, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER TO GO TOGETHER THAT NIGHT...

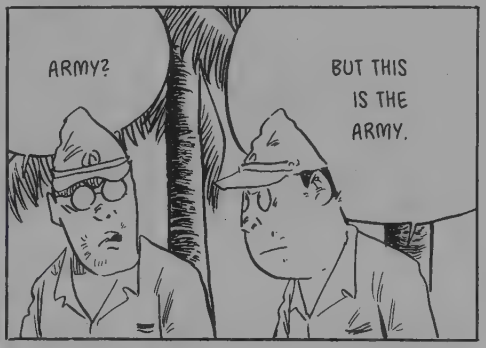

WHAT HAVE WE GAINED, BEING ALIVE STILL...

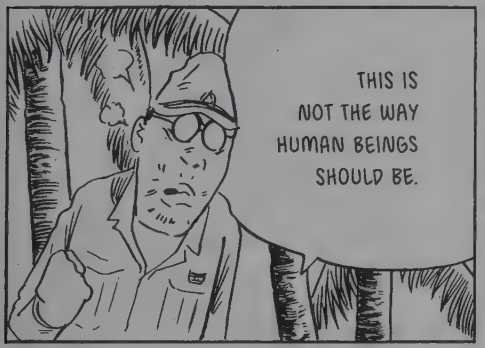

RATHER THAN SIT HERE AND WAIT FOR DEATH...
I AM NOT WORKED UP!
I'LL MAKE A LAST APPEAL FOR OUR LIVES.
DOCTOR, YOU CAN'T...
I'LL GET SOME SUPPLIES TOGETHER. GET ON A DAIHATSU* AND GO SEE THE GENERAL AT DIVISION HQ.
*A SHALLOW, BOXY BOAT USED BY THE JAPANESE IMPERIAL NAVY DURING WWII.
UNSWAYED BY THE PLEAS OF HIS COMPANIONS, THE DOCTOR BOARDED THE DAIHATSU.

IT'S WRONG TO GET IN THE WAY OF THAT!


REGARDLESS, IT IS THE WILL OF THE UNIVERSE FOR ALL LIVING THINGS TO LIVE.

THIS 'ARMY' IS THE MOST DISEASED THING HUMANITY HAS EVER SEEN.


ARMY?
BUT THIS IS THE ARMY.


THIS IS NOT THE WAY HUMAN BEINGS SHOULD BE.

DOCTOR, DON'T GET SO WORKED UP.

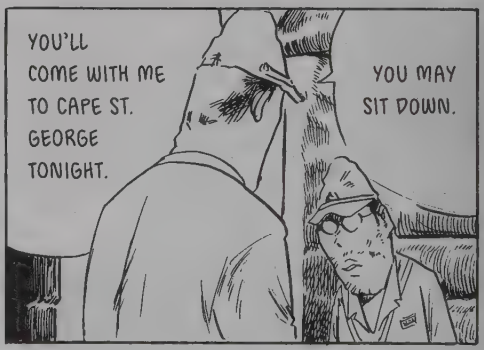
WE KNOW NOTHING OF THE HEALTH OF THE CLEAR SKY, THE SINGING BIRDS, THE ISLAND NATIVES.

THOSE FOOLS ARE PUSHING EVEN HARDER.
HMPH, AND ON THE DAY OF MY DEPARTURE...

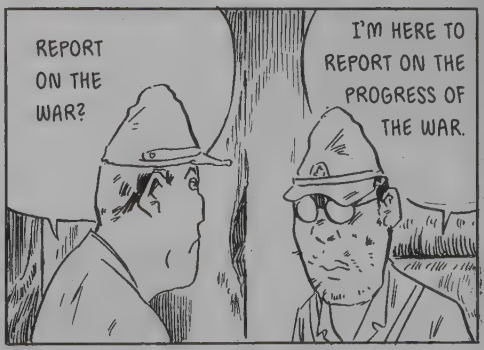
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM

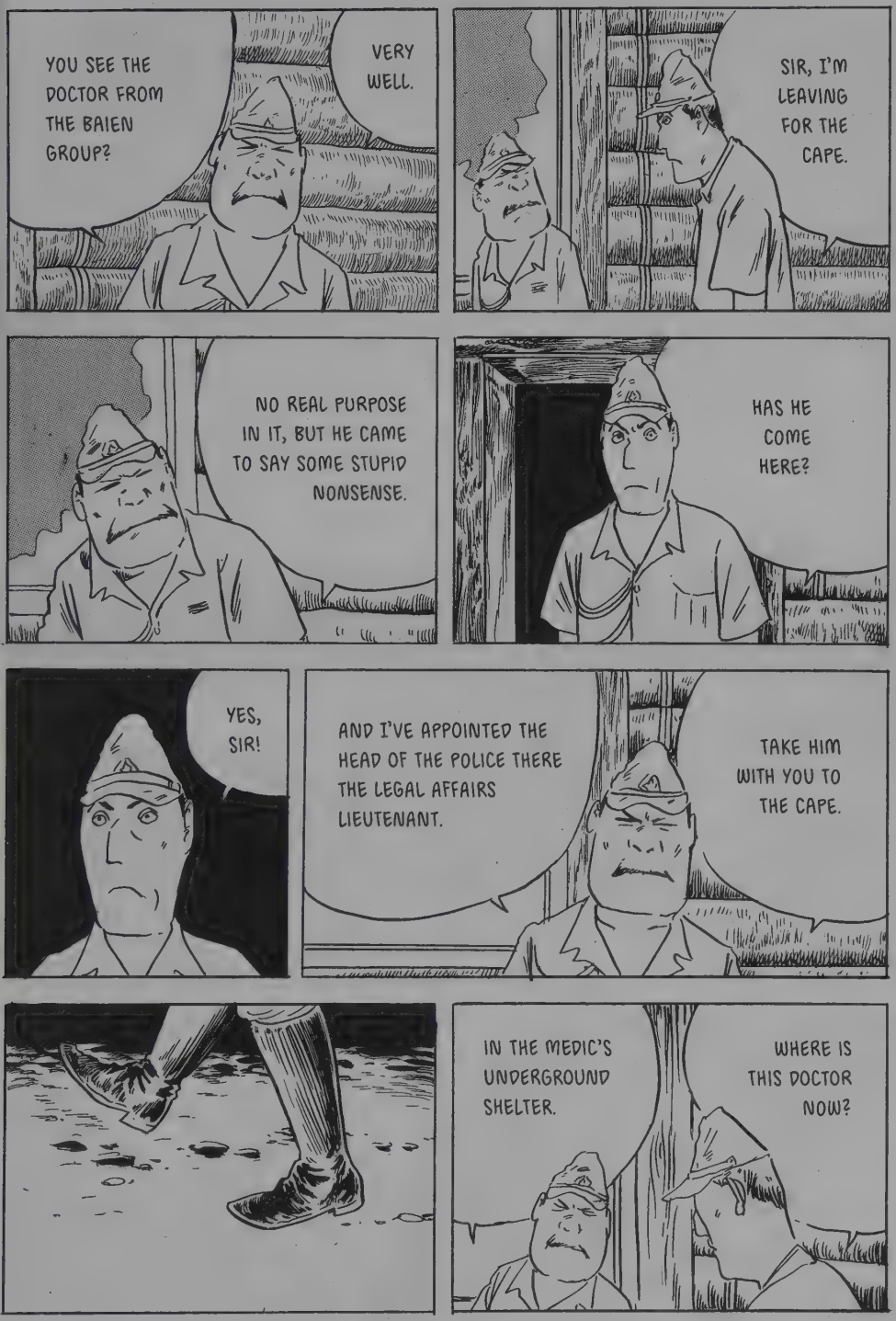
ARE YOU THE GENERAL, SIR?

WHY DID YOU COME HERE?
WHAT?

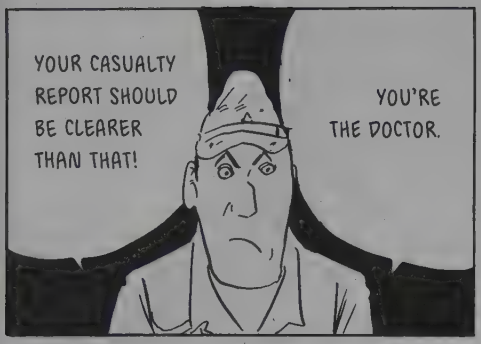

YOU'LL COME WITH ME TO CAPE ST. GEORGE TONIGHT.
YOU MAY SIT DOWN.

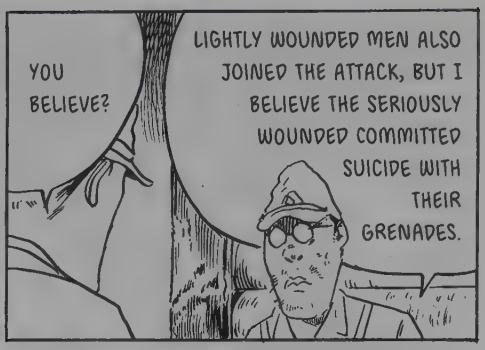
WHAT ABOUT YOUR WOUNDED?
THE DOCTOR FROM A SPECIAL ATTACK UNIT?


REPORT ON THE WAR?
I'M HERE TO REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF THE WAR.

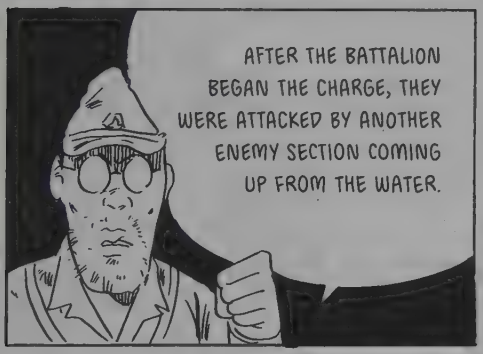

YOU SEE THE DOCTOR FROM THE BAIEN GROUP?
VERY WELL.
SIR, I'M LEAVING FOR THE CAPE.
NO REAL PURPOSE IN IT, BUT HE CAME TO SAY SOME STUPID NONSENSE.
HAS HE COME HERE?
YES, SIR!
AND I'VE APPOINTED THE HEAD OF THE POLICE THERE THE LEGAL AFFAIRS LIEUTENANT.
TAKE HIM WITH YOU TO THE CAPE.
IN THE MEDIC'S UNDERGROUND SHELTER.
WHERE IS THIS DOCTOR NOW?

FOOL!
I WAS NOT PERMITTED TO SEE HIM.
I CAME ALL THE WAY HERE BECAUSE I HAVE SOMETHING I WOULD LIKE TO SAY TO THE GENERAL.
WHAT IS THIS THING YOU HAD TO SAY?
IF YOU WERE IN FACT ABLE TO MEET WITH THE GENERAL, YOU WOULD ONLY FACE CHARGES AS A DESERTER.
I AM JUST A MAN WHO WILL JOIN YOU ON A DAIHATSU.
YOU'LL ONLY HIT ME IF I DO TELL YOU, SIR.
NO, I GIVE UP ON THAT.
COULD I ASK YOU FOR A CIGARETTE?
I AM REALLY SORRY FOR ASKING, BUT PERHAPS...
I WON'T HIT YOU, SO WHY DON'T YOU TRY ME?


YOUR CASUALTY REPORT SHOULD BE CLEARER THAN THAT!
YOU'RE THE DOCTOR.

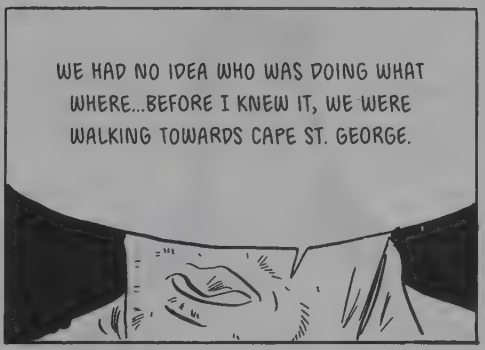

YOU BELIEVE?
LIGHTLY WOUNDED MEN ALSO JOINED THE ATTACK, BUT I BELIEVE THE SERIOUSLY WOUNDED COMMITTED SUICIDE WITH THEIR GRENADES.

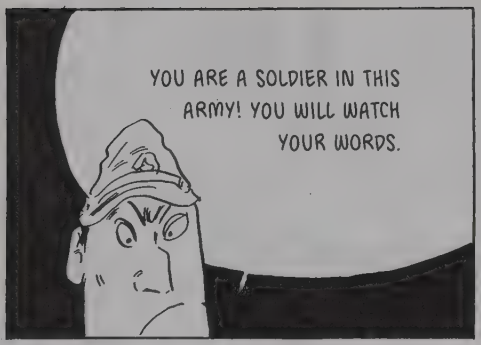
YOU LEFT YOUR WOUNDED AND RAN AWAY, DIDN'T YOU?

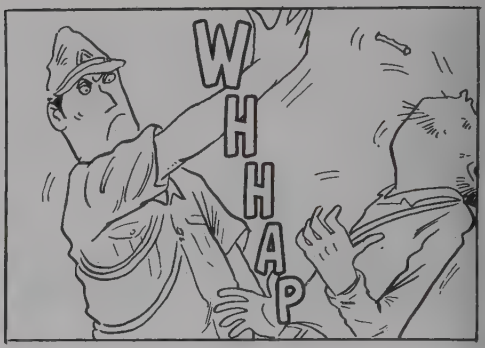

AFTER THE BATTALION BEGAN THE CHARGE, THEY WERE ATTACKED BY ANOTHER ENEMY SECTION COMING UP FROM THE WATER.

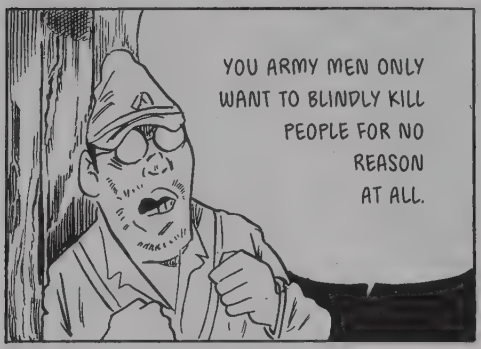
SIR.
YOU IDIOT!

YOU CAME ALL THE WAY HERE TO REPORT THAT?

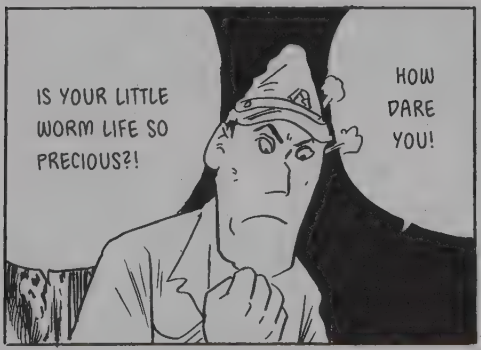

WE HAD NO IDEA WHO WAS DOING WHAT WHERE...BEFORE I KNEW IT, WE WERE WALKING TOWARDS CAPE ST. GEORGE.


YOU ARE A SOLDIER IN THIS ARMY! YOU WILL WATCH YOUR WORDS.

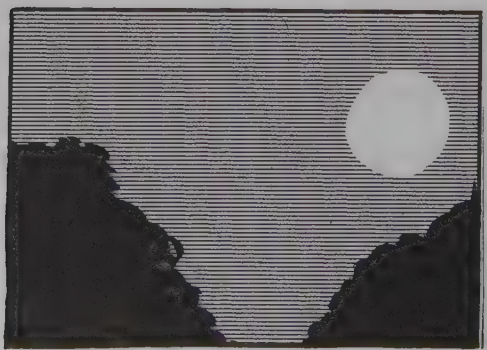

WHAP

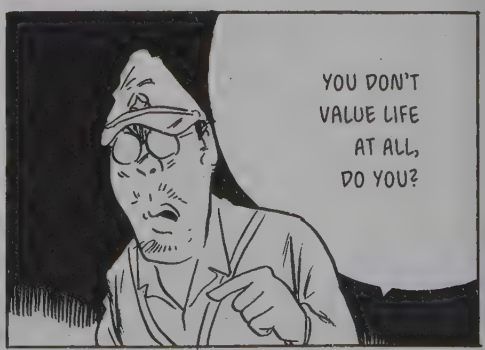

YOU ARMY MEN ONLY WANT TO BLINDLY KILL PEOPLE FOR NO REASON AT ALL.

I'M NO SOLDIER.
I'M A DOCTOR.


IS YOUR LITTLE WORM LIFE SO PRECIOUS?!
HOW DARE YOU!

STEP BACK AND TAKE A LOOK AT THE BIG PICTURE!
YOU'RE ALL MAD!



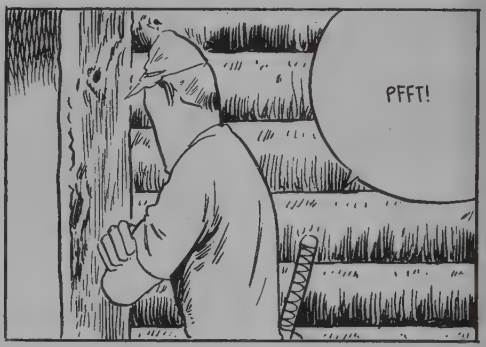

YOU DON'T VALUE LIFE AT ALL, DO YOU?

I HAVEN'T HAD A SMOKE IN A MONTH NOW.
YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE ANY CIGARETTES?
TO BUY TIME.
AND ON TOP OF THAT, HAVE THAT BATTALION GO ON A SUICIDE MISSION?
SIR, WHY HAVE A SMALL BATTALION ATTACK A LARGER FORCE THEY CANNOT POSSIBLY WIN AGAINST?
BUT TO ALLOW THE REAR TO ENTRENCH, THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO NEED, NO NEED FOR A SUICIDE CHARGE! ISN'T STRATEGY ABOUT REACHING THE GOAL WITHOUT A SUICIDE CHARGE?
TO ALLOW THE REAR TO ENTRENCH AND MUSTER ITS FORCES PROPERLY.
BUT WHY, SIR? TIME FOR WHAT?
IMBECILE!
WHAT'S SO STRATEGIC ABOUT LOSING MEN WITH BRIGHT FUTURES IN A SUICIDE CHARGE?

I'VE HAD MY FILL OF BEING HIT.
SIR, LET'S JUST STOP THIS.

IS THAT ANY WAY TO TALK TO A SUPERIOR OFFICER?

TAK
TAK

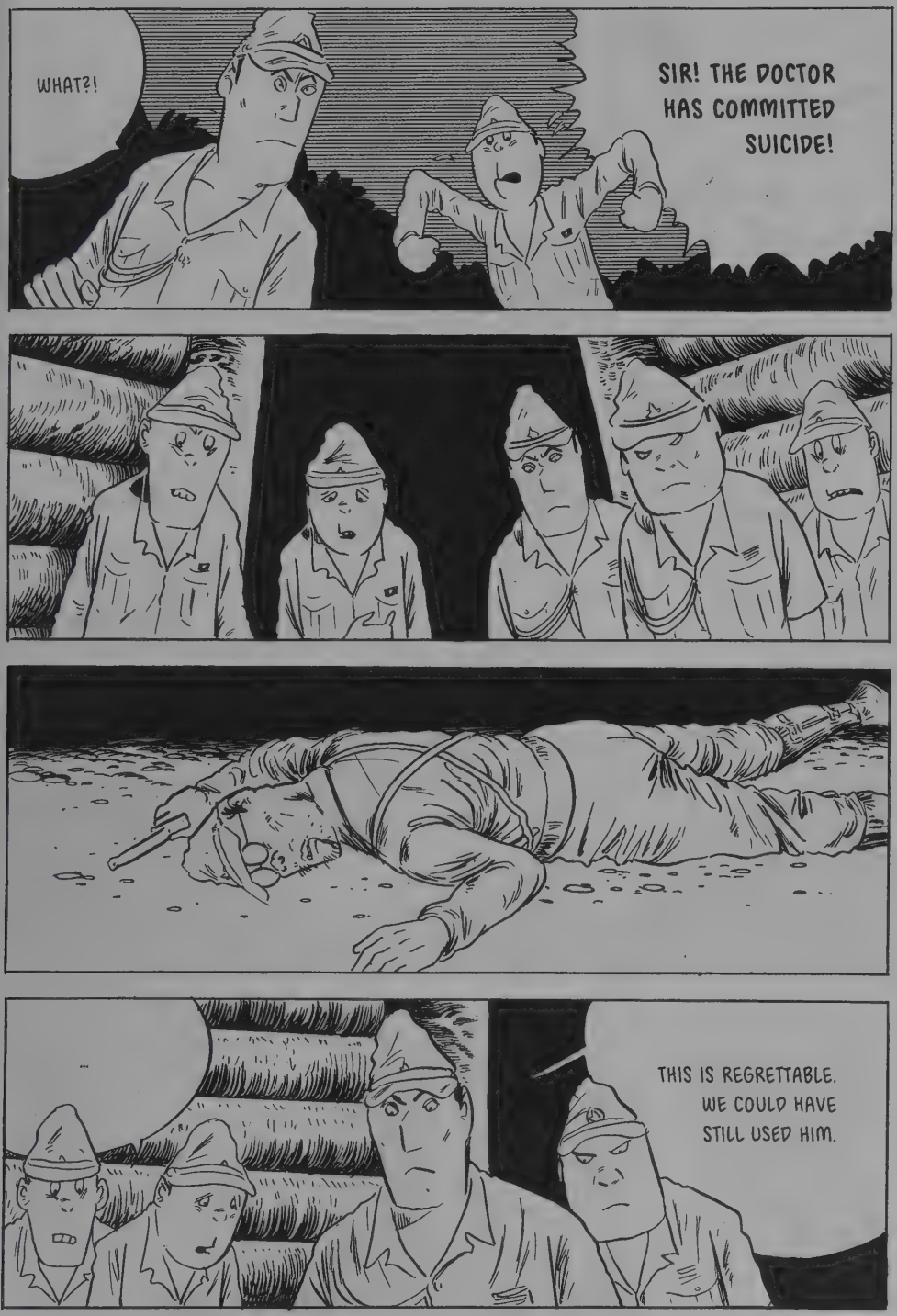

PFFT!

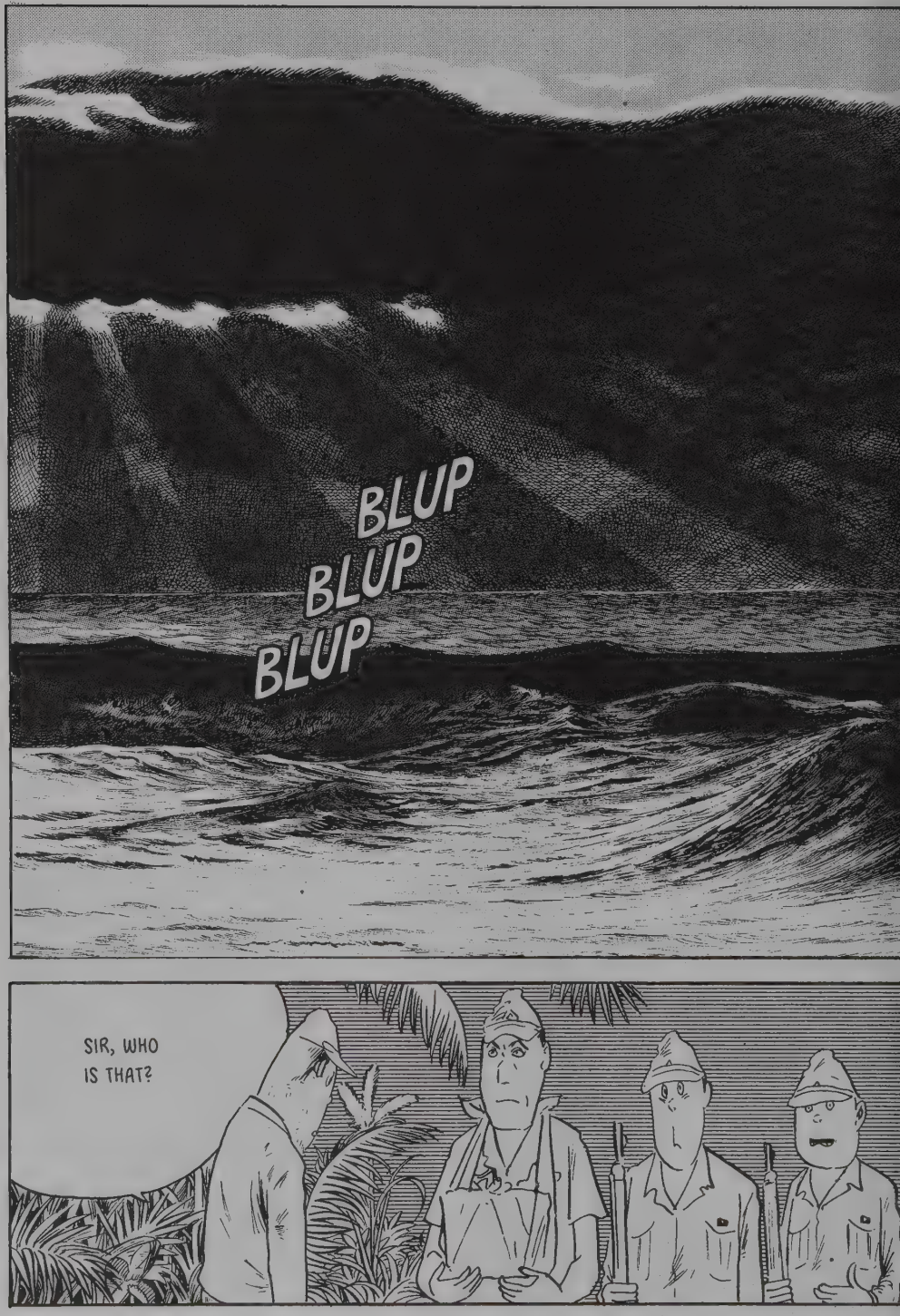
BANG
A MOMENT LATER, THE REPORT OF A SINGLE SHOT ECHOED THROUGH THE NIGHT

KREE
KREE

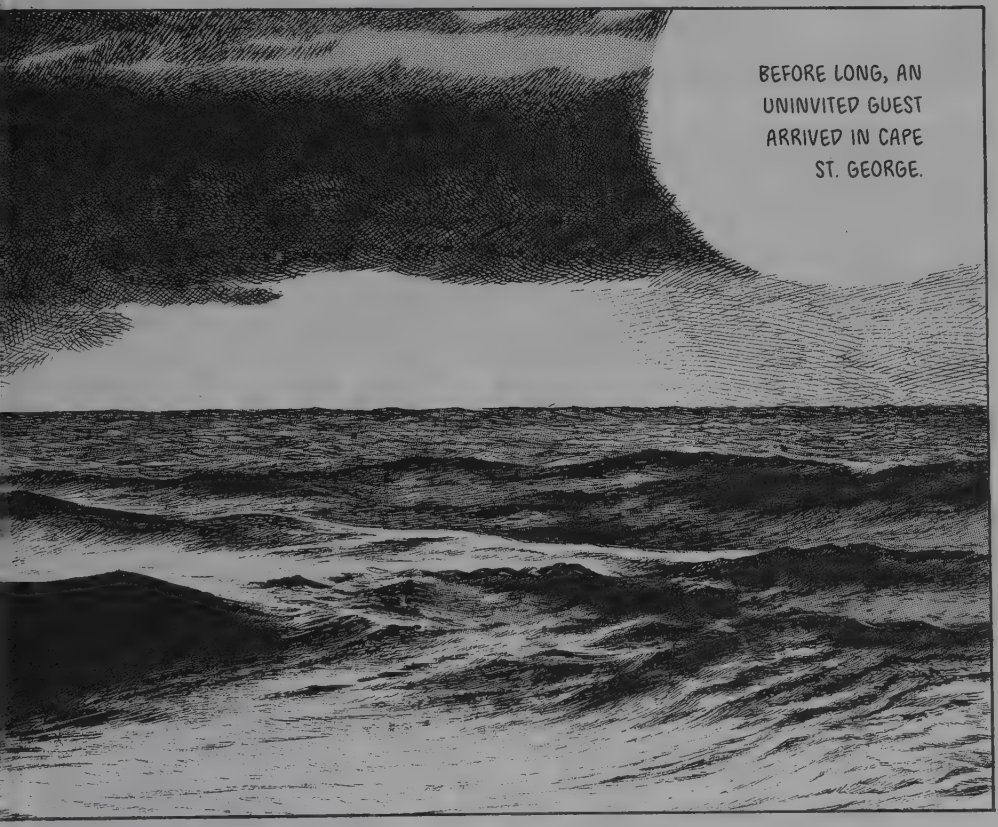
IN OTHER COUNTRIES, ARMIES ALLOW THEIR SOLDIERS TO FIGHT AND BE TAKEN PRISONER.
BUT, SIR...
WE CAN'T VERY WELL PLAN STRATEGIES BRIMMING WITH HUMAN EMOTION.
IT'S BECAUSE WE MUST CARRY OUT THESE SENSELESS SUICIDE CHARGES.
WHY IS THIS NOT PERMITTED IN OUR ARMY?
I ONLY RESPECT LIFE!
YOU SHAME YOUR COUNTRY!
WHAT THE HELL—
YOU THINK I'M NOT A MAN?
DO I SOUND LIKE A PANSY!
QUIT BEING SUCH A PANSY!

WE CANNOT BURY THE DOCTOR HERE.
YES, SIR.
DELAY MY DEPARTURE.
YES, SIR.
WE WILL CREMATE HIM AND TAKE HIS REMAINS TO BE BURIED IN CAPE ST. GEORGE, WHERE HIS SECTION IS.
KRACKLE
KRACKLE
KRACKLE
KRACKLE


WHAT?!
SIR! THE DOCTOR HAS COMMITTED SUICIDE!
THIS IS REGRETTABLE. WE COULD HAVE STILL USED HIM.


BLUP
BLUP
BLUP
SIR, WHO IS THAT?

EMISSARY OF DEATH



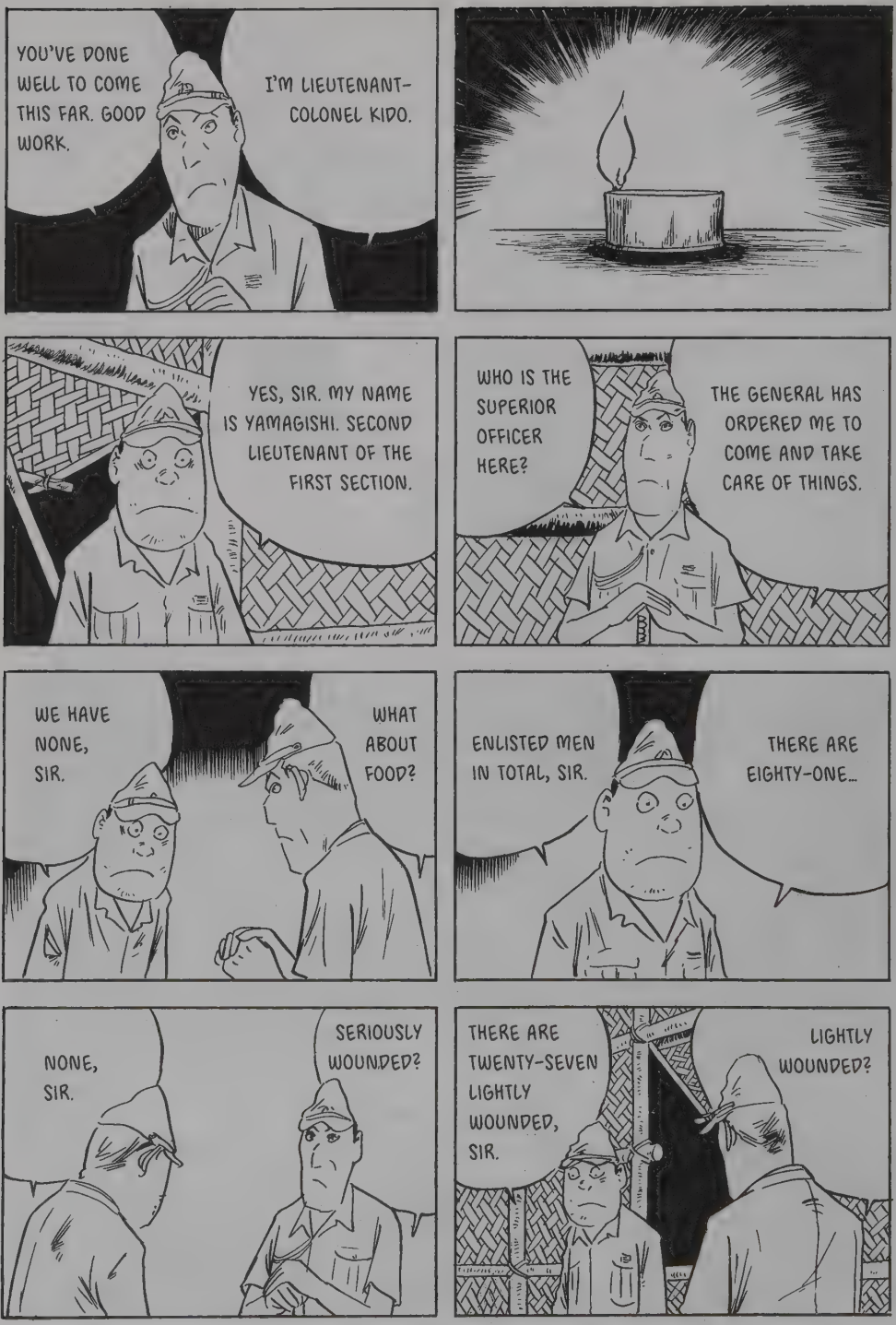
JAPANESE BUDDHIST TRADITION, THE DEAD ARE CREMATED AND PLACED IN A WHITE WOODEN BOX.

THEY'RE LIVING IN THE HUT THEY BUILT IN THE JUNGLE.
NO, THIS PLACE IS QUITE GOOD. WHERE ARE THE BAIEN SOLDIERS?
YES, SIR!
GO AND TELL THE OFFICERS TO GATHER HERE.
YES, SIR!
DO NOT ALLOW THE ENLISTED MEN TO APPROACH.

THE DOCTOR!!
THE DOCTOR. I FELT HE SHOULD BE BURIED HERE WITH THE REST OF THE SOLDIERS.
HE COMMITTED SUICIDE.
WAS HE DISCIPLINED?
WELL THEN, I WILL SPEND THE NIGHT HERE.
SIR, THE LIVING QUARTERS ARE THIS WAY.
THE PLACE WAS PUT TOGETHER RATHER QUICKLY, SO...

WHAT'RE WE EVEN SUPPOSED TO BE PROTECTING ANYMORE?
YOU SAID IT!
WHAT THE HELL ARE WE FIGHTING FOR THEN?
WONDER IF THAT CHIEF OF STAFF BROUGHT US ANYTHING TO EAT.
DAMN RIGHT.
PROB'LY GONNA BE COURT-MARTIALED.
THAT'S ALL I GIVE A SHIT ABOUT.
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU WANT?
WELL, IF IT ISN'T LIEUTENANT HOMU!
GET OUTTA HERE.

DID YOU HEAR THE CHIEF OF STAFF'S HERE?
AND MEANWHILE, OUR COUNTRY'S GETTING BOMBED.
HUH.

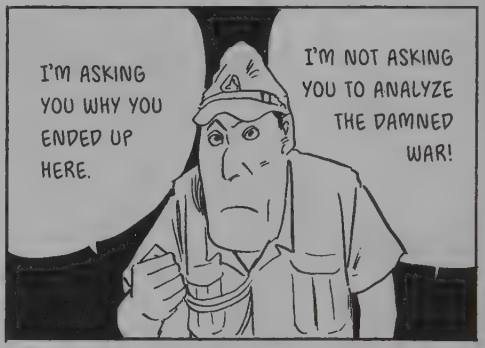

YOU'VE DONE WELL TO COME THIS FAR. GOOD WORK.
I'M LIEUTENANT-COLONEL KIDO.
YES, SIR. MY NAME IS YAMAGISHI. SECOND LIEUTENANT OF THE FIRST SECTION.
WHO IS THE SUPERIOR OFFICER HERE?
THE GENERAL HAS ORDERED ME TO COME AND TAKE CARE OF THINGS.
WE HAVE NONE, SIR.
WHAT ABOUT FOOD?
ENLISTED MEN IN TOTAL, SIR.
THERE ARE EIGHTY-ONE...
NONE, SIR.
SERIOUSLY WOUNDED?
THERE ARE TWENTY-SEVEN LIGHTLY WOUNDED, SIR.
LIGHTLY WOUNDED?

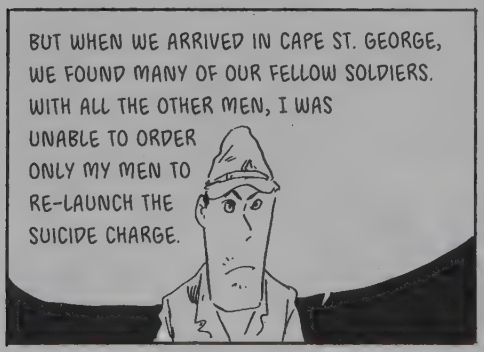
YES, SIR.
NOW GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!
THIS IS NO PLACE FOR AN ENLISTED MAN LIKE YOU.
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU WANT?!
AN IMPORTANT MEETING'S STARTING, ASSHOLE.
YES, UM, WELL—
DIDN'T I TELL YOU TO GET OUT OF HERE?

IDIOT!
AND THE FACT THAT MAJOR TADOKORO DECIDED THE ENTIRE BATTALION WOULD ATTEMPT A SUICIDE CHARGE.

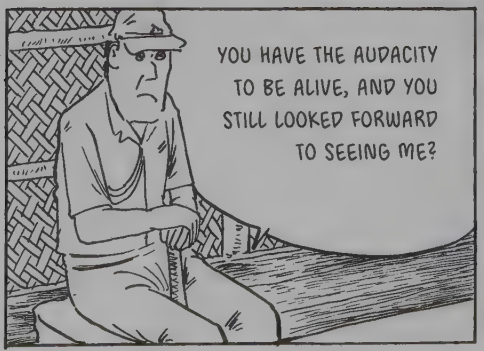
THE REASONS FOR THE BAIEN FAILURE WAS THE EARLY ABANDONMENT OF THE WARANGOE CAMP...

THE MEN BELOW ME WERE ALSO HUNGRY.
YES, SIR. I WAS VERY HUNGRY AND...


I'M ASKING YOU WHY YOU ENDED UP HERE.
I'M NOT ASKING YOU TO ANALYZE THE DAMNED WAR!


BUT WHEN WE ARRIVED IN CAPE ST. GEORGE, WE FOUND MANY OF OUR FELLOW SOLDIERS. WITH ALL THE OTHER MEN, I WAS UNABLE TO ORDER ONLY MY MEN TO RE-LAUNCH THE SUICIDE CHARGE.

YOU BEGGING BASTARD!
ANYWAY, I DECIDED THAT I WOULD ALLOW MY MEN TO EAT THEIR FILL, AND THEN WE WOULD RE-LAUNCH THE ATTACK.


YOU HAVE THE AUDACITY TO BE ALIVE, AND YOU STILL LOOKED FORWARD TO SEEING ME?

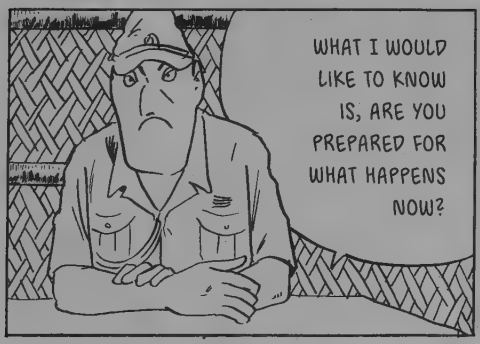
I HEARD YOU WERE COMING, SIR, AND I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.

I WILL GIVE YOUR ORDERS AFTER THE INVESTIGATION IS COMPLETE.
AS TO WHAT COMES NEXT...
...
WHICH MEANS YOU ABANDONED THE SERIOUSLY WOUNDED, YES?
YES, SIR.
YOU WILL COME TO THE MAIN BUILDING ONE AT A TIME TOMORROW TO REPORT ON YOUR ACTIONS.
AND SO, THE FOLLOWING MORNING, LIEUTENANT COLONEL KIDO BEGAN HIS INVESTIGATION

WHEN?
I WILL LEAD MY MEN ON ANOTHER SUICIDE CHARGE.
GOOD. YOU'VE MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE.
RIGHT AWAY, SIR!!
YES, SIR!
THAT'S THE RIGHT CHOICE, BUT I'LL GIVE YOU ORDERS ON THE TIMING LATER.
YES, SIR.
CALL IN SECOND LIEUTENANTS YAMAGISHI AND KITAZAKI.

YOUR SUPERIOR OFFICERS AND FELLOW SOLDIERS WENT INTO THAT ATTACK BELIEVING THAT YOU WOULD DIE ALONGSIDE THEM.
YES, SIR.
YOU REALLY HAVE SOME NERVE—ALIVE AFTER SUCH A BETRAYAL...
WHAT WILL YOU DO?
I'LL DO IT!

NCOS, YOU'RE TO GO SEE THE LIEUTENANT-COLONEL IN ORDER OF SENIORITY.
QUIT YOUR JABBERING AND GET CRACKING ON THOSE PALM TREES!
DO YOU THINK HE'LL CALL THE ENLISTED GUYS?
NOW THE NCOS?
SHUT YOUR PIE HOLE! IT'S 'CAUSE OF THE MALARIA!
YOU LOOK PALE, SIR...
YES, SIR.


WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW IS, ARE YOU PREPARED FOR WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

I FULLY UNDERSTAND THE REASONS FOR WHAT HAPPENED, BUT...

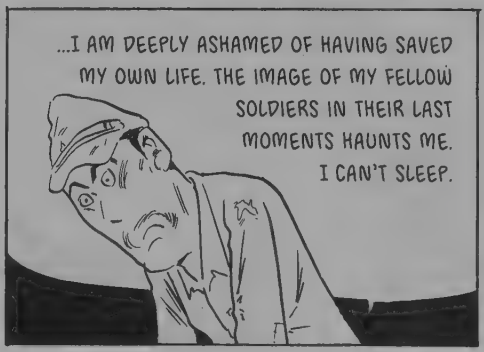
AND WHAT ARE YOU PREPARED FOR?
WE ARE PREPARED, SIR.

...

WELL, WE'LL TALK AGAIN TOMORROW.

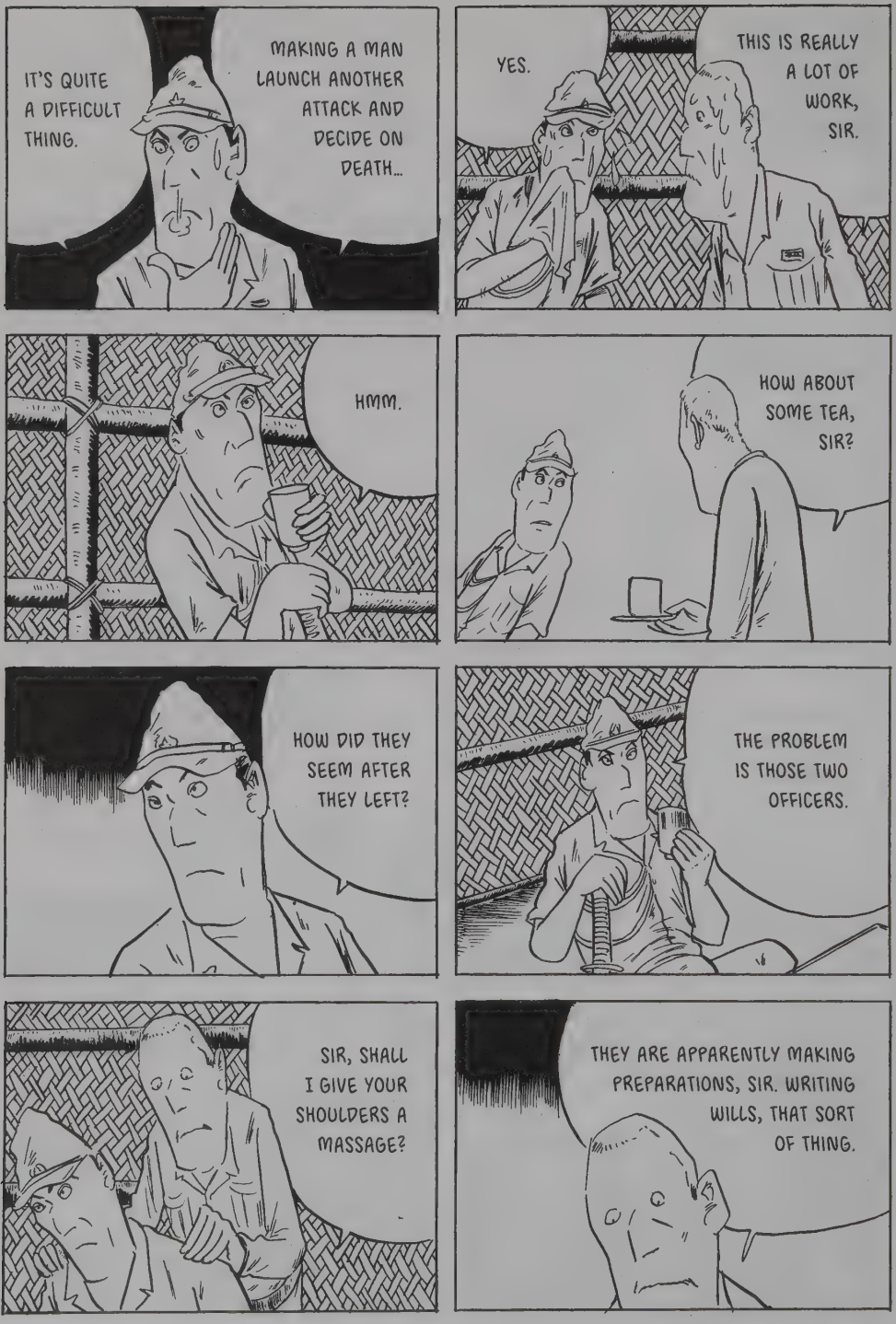
...

I WAS A COWARD.
I WISH I HAD DIED THEN.
THERE IS A WAY FOR YOU TO MAKE AMENDS FOR YOUR COWARDICE.
I WAS A FOOL!
I'LL DO IT!
YAAAH
I'LL DO IT!
STOP IT!


...I AM DEEPLY ASHAMED OF HAVING SAVED MY OWN LIFE. THE IMAGE OF MY FELLOW SOLDIERS IN THEIR LAST MOMENTS HAUNTS ME. I CAN'T SLEEP.

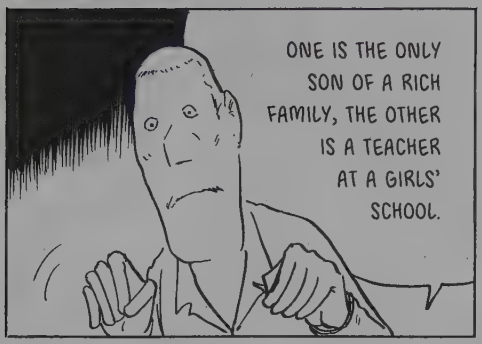
I AM DEEPLY SADDENED.
I CAN'T BEGIN TO EXPRESS MY REGRET OF HAVING SURVIVED.

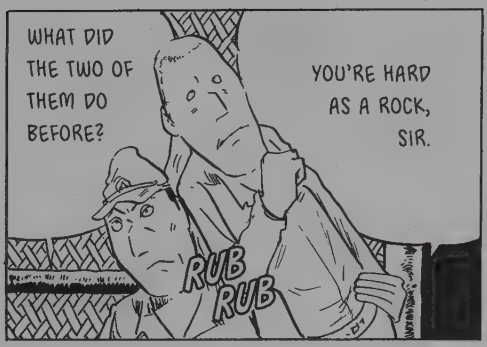
ATTACK AGAIN BY MYSELF.
BUT I WAS UNABLE TO...

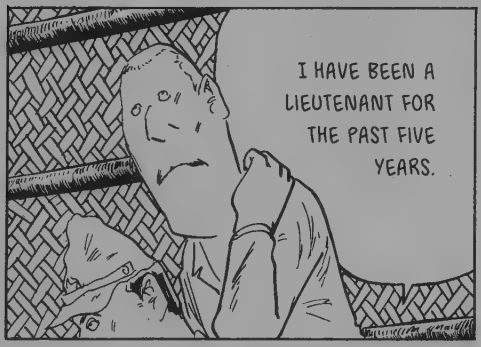

IT'S QUITE A DIFFICULT THING.
MAKING A MAN LAUNCH ANOTHER ATTACK AND DECIDE ON DEATH...
YES.
THIS IS REALLY A LOT OF WORK, SIR.
HMM.
HOW ABOUT SOME TEA, SIR?
HOW DID THEY SEEM AFTER THEY LEFT?
THE PROBLEM IS THOSE TWO OFFICERS.
SIR, SHALL I GIVE YOUR SHOULDERS A MASSAGE?
THEY ARE APPARENTLY MAKING PREPARATIONS, SIR. WRITING WILLS, THAT SORT OF THING.

KUNK
I CAN'T WAIT!
WILL YOU JUST WAIT!
AAGH
THUNK
OOPH!
NNNGGH
WATCH OUT!
CALL A MEDIC. GET A SEDATIVE.
WAAAAAH

STIFF SHOULDERS MEAN A BLOCKED SPIRIT.
IN ORIENTAL MEDICINE, THEY SAY...
ANYWAY, WHAT TO DO WITH THOSE TWO MEN...
OOPS!
HOMU, YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE MY EYES OUT!
OF COURSE, THEY ARE PATHETIC, BUT...
AS LONG AS THEY REFUSE TO ACCEPT DEATH AND JOIN THE ATTACK, I MUST DEAL WITH THEM ACCORDING TO MARTIAL LAW.
KREE KREE
I AM NOT SO CERTAIN.
WHEN I THINK ABOUT THEIR FAMILIES...


ONE IS THE ONLY SON OF A RICH FAMILY, THE OTHER IS A TEACHER AT A GIRLS' SCHOOL.

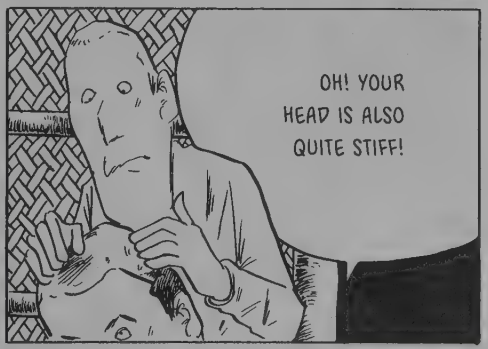

WHAT DID THE TWO OF THEM DO BEFORE?
YOU'RE HARD AS A ROCK, SIR.
RUB RUB


I HAVE BEEN A LIEUTENANT FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS.

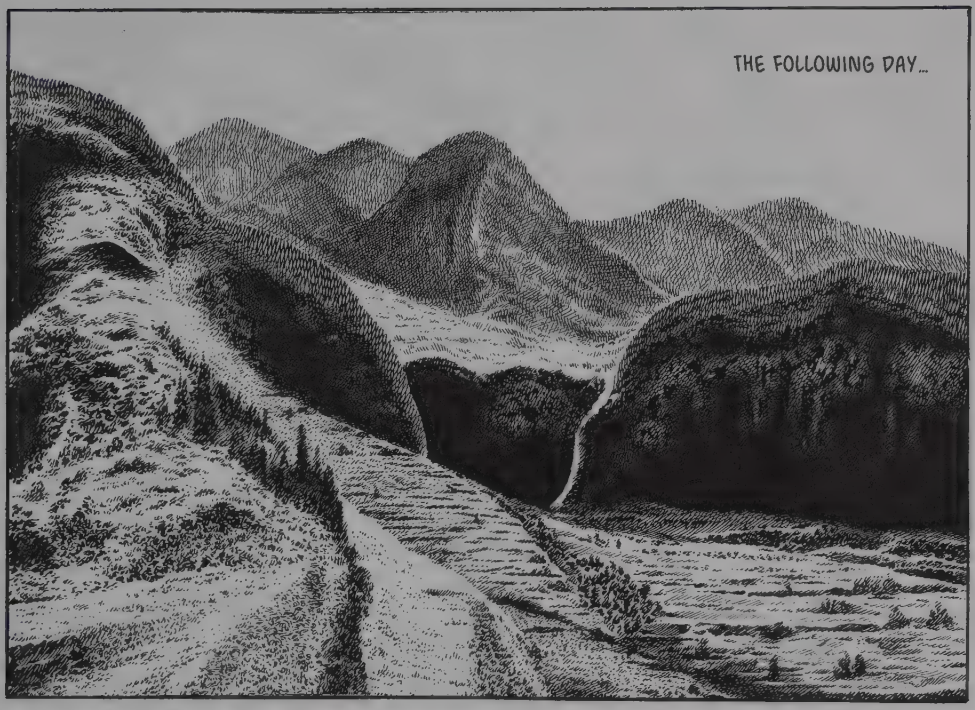
SIR, I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU A RATHER STRANGE QUESTION.
HMM.

THAT IS A DIFFICULT ONE, ISN'T IT?

HMM.
I WONDER, SIR, IF THERE HASN'T BEEN SOME MISTAKE AT HUMAN RESOURCES.

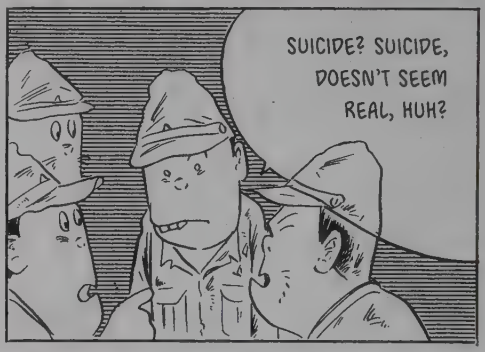

OH! YOUR HEAD IS ALSO QUITE STIFF!

MM HMM.
OH! HERE COME OUR TWO DILLY-DALLIERS NOW.
SIR, WE WILL COMMIT SUICIDE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR ACTIONS.
YOU MAY ENTER.
HOWEVER, YOU MUST CALL ME BEFORE YOU DO SO.
WELL DONE. YOU'VE MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE...
I'LL BE WAITING IN THIS HUT.
YES, SIR.
I HAVE SOMETHING I WOULD LIKE TO TELL YOU AS I WITNESS YOUR LAST MOMENTS.


THE FOLLOWING DAY...

I HEARD SECOND LIEUTENANT YAMAGISHI AND ANOTHER OFFICER ARE BEING FORCED INTO SUICIDE.

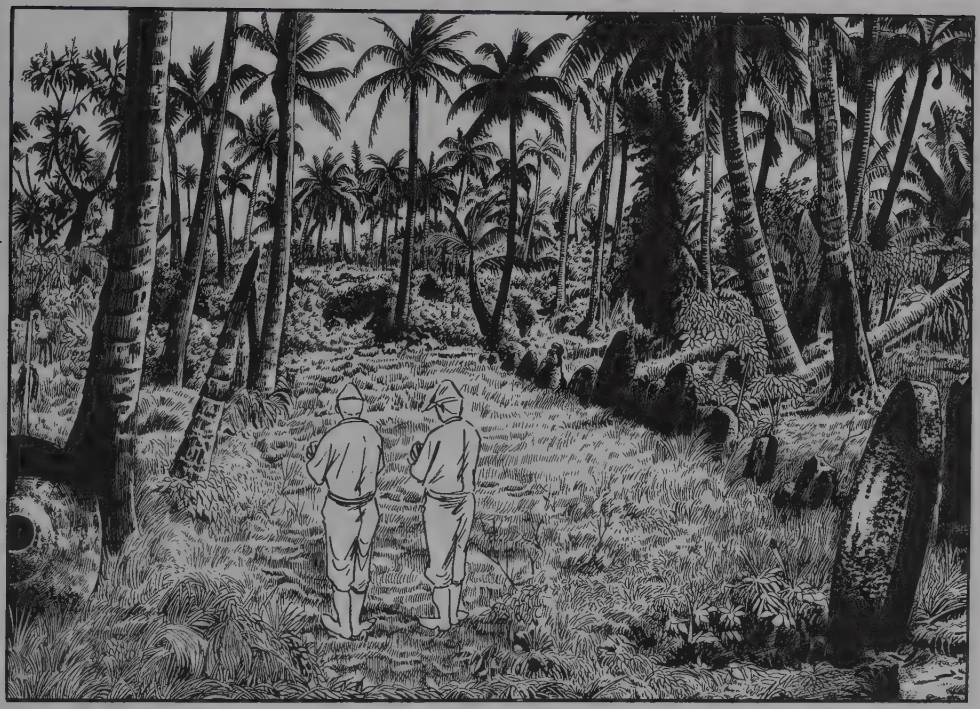
WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN TO US?

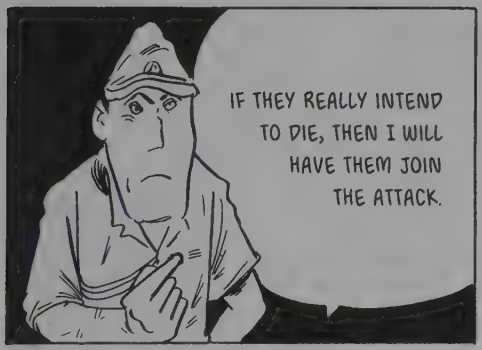

SUICIDE? SUICIDE, DOESN'T SEEM REAL, HUH?

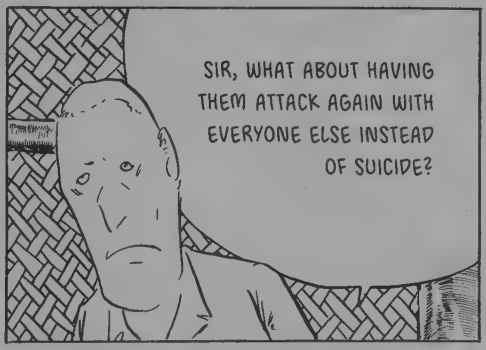
FORGET THAT. DID YOU BOIL THAT PAPAYA ROOT?

PROB'LY BAIEN.
WHERE?

RUMOUR HAS IT WE'RE ATTACKING AGAIN.



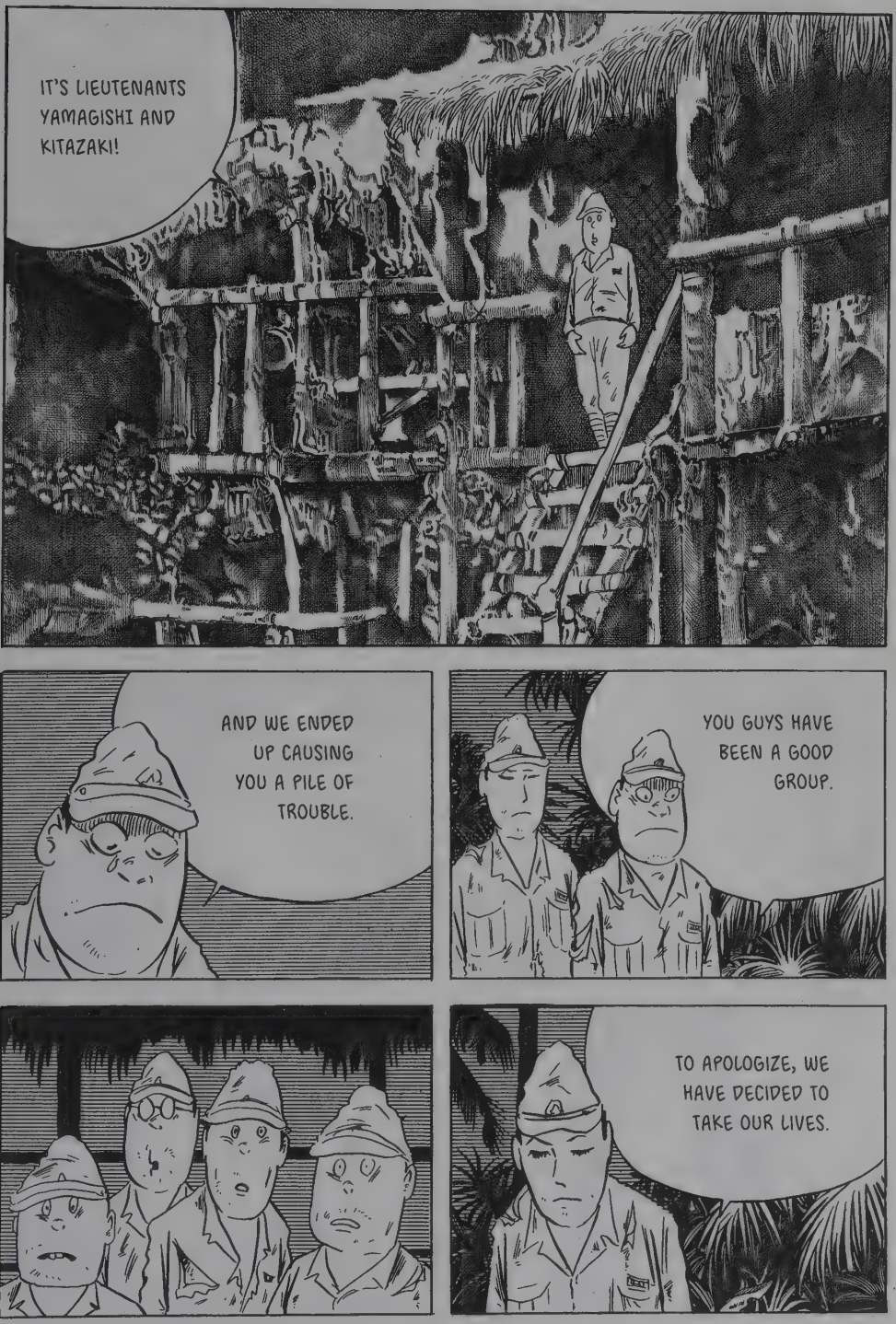

IF THEY REALLY INTEND TO DIE, THEN I WILL HAVE THEM JOIN THE ATTACK.


SIR, WHAT ABOUT HAVING THEM ATTACK AGAIN WITH EVERYONE ELSE INSTEAD OF SUICIDE?

BUT IT'S ALREADY EVENING, SIR.

I AM WAITING HERE FOR THEIR DECISION.

YOU GUYS TAKE CARE, OKAY?
WE'LL TELL YOUR FAMILIES HOW COURAGEOUS YOU WERE.
PSSSSHH
PSSSSSHH
PSSSH
IT SEEMS THAT THE TWO LIEUTENANTS HAVE SAID THEIR GOOD-BYES TO THE ENLISTED MEN.
A BIT OF TROUBLE, SIR.
ARE YOU AWAKE, SIR?

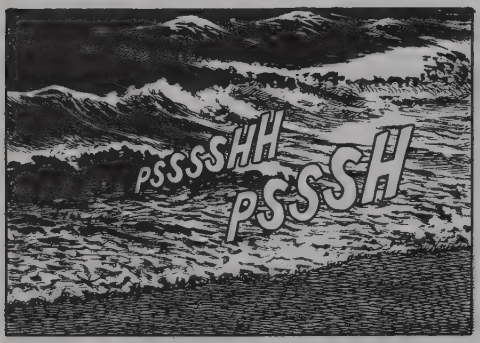

IT'S LIEUTENANTS YAMAGISHI AND KITAZAKI!
AND WE ENDED UP CAUSING YOU A PILE OF TROUBLE.
YOU GUYS HAVE BEEN A GOOD GROUP.
TO APOLOGIZE, WE HAVE DECIDED TO TAKE OUR LIVES.

FROM MY MOM.
NO.
THOSE LETTERS FROM YOUR GIRL?
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT SUICIDE CHARGE FOR...
PSSSSHH
PSSSH
JUST SHUT UP, OKAY?
WHAT ARE WE KILLING OURSELVES FOR?

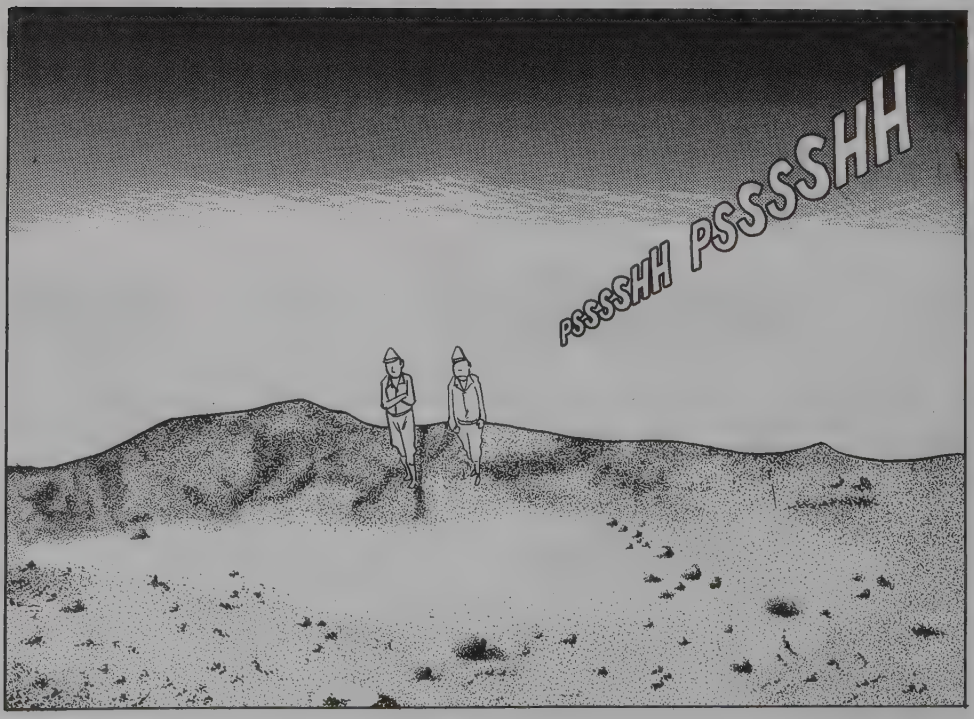
THEY SHOULD'VE COME TO ME FIRST.
SO THE ENLISTED MEN KNOW THEN?
AND NOW THE SUN IS RISING...
PSSSSHH
PSSSSHH

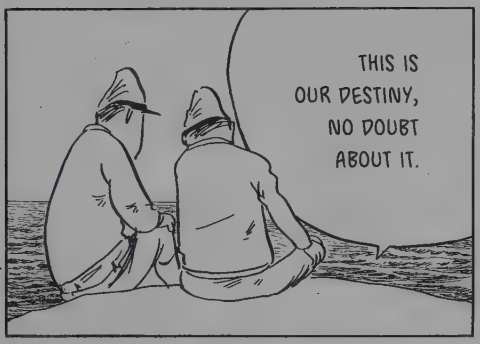
THERE'S NO WAY AROUND IT, SIR. LET'S TAKE CARE OF THIS NOW.

THE DAY IS FULLY ON US, ISN'T IT?


PSSSSHH
PSSSH

YES, SIR.
WE NEED TO FIND AN APPROPRIATE PLACE, SOMEWHERE DISCREET.


PSSSSHH PSSSSHH


THIS IS OUR DESTINY, NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.

NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE KICK AND SCREAM, THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT NOW.

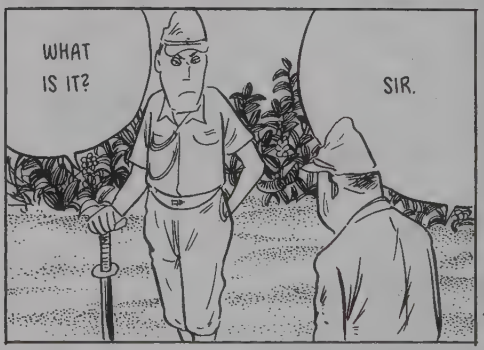
PSSSH
PSSSSHH
PSSSSHH

PSSSSHH
PSSSH

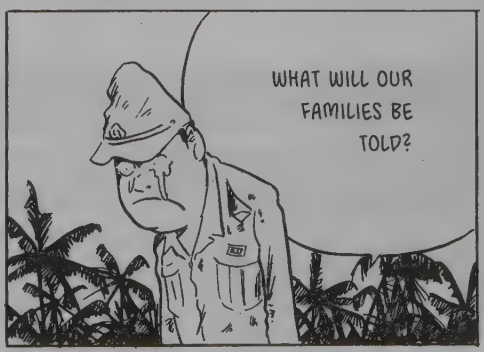
...

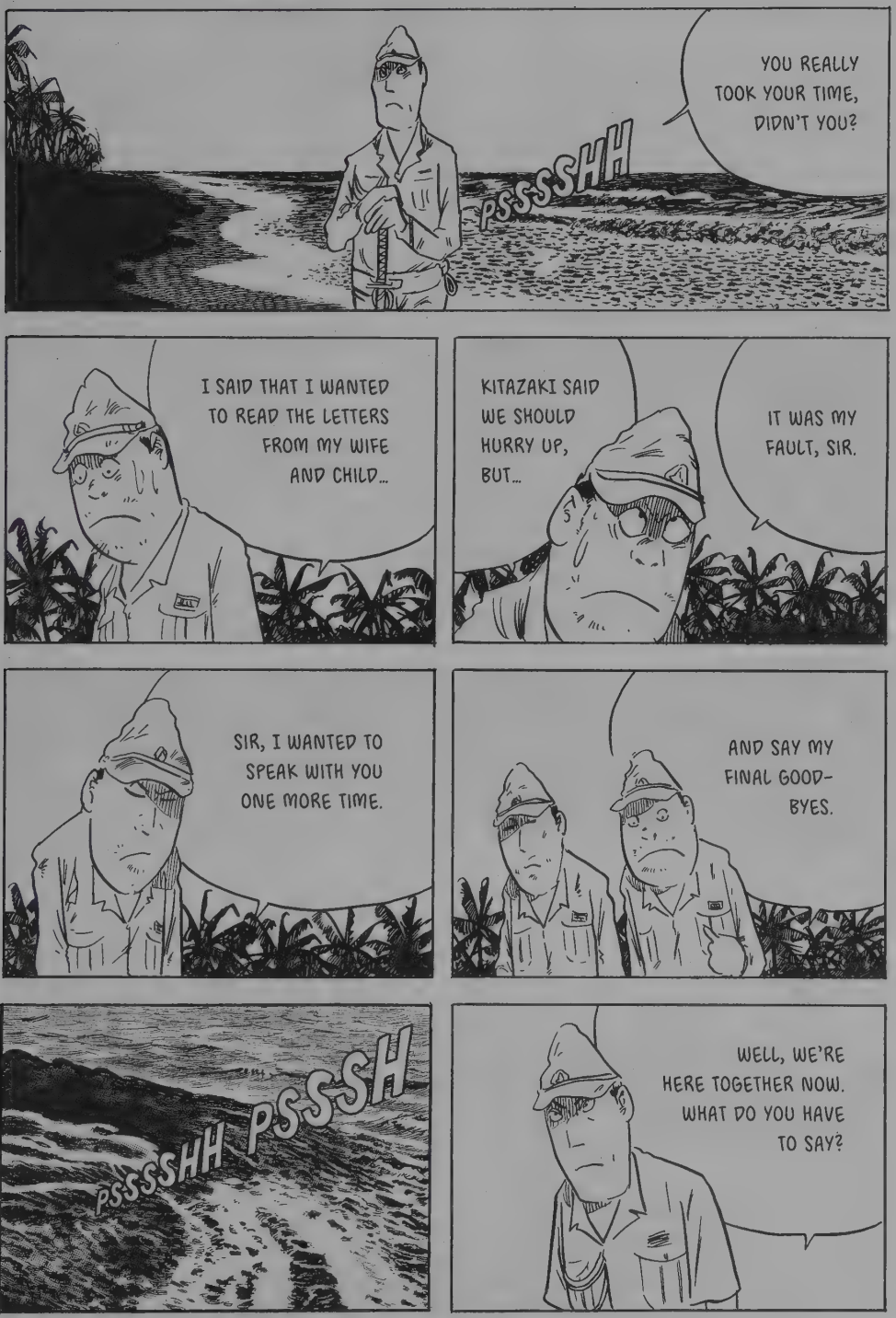
NO ONE ELSE IS HERE. YOU MAY TALK FREELY.

IF WE KILL OURSELVES HERE...


WHAT IS IT?
SIR.

PSSSSHH
PSSSSHH
PSSSH


WHAT WILL OUR FAMILIES BE TOLD?


YOU REALLY TOOK YOUR TIME, DIDN'T YOU?
PS-S-SHH
I SAID THAT I WANTED TO READ THE LETTERS FROM MY WIFE AND CHILD...
KITAZAKI SAID WE SHOULD HURRY UP, BUT...
IT WAS MY FAULT, SIR.
SIR, I WANTED TO SPEAK WITH YOU ONE MORE TIME.
AND SAY MY FINAL GOOD-BYES.
PSSSSHH PSSSH
WELL, WE'RE HERE TOGETHER NOW. WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY?

HOW ABOUT A LAST CIGARETTE?
FWOO
FWOO
EVERYTHING'S READY, SIR.
HAAH
FLICK

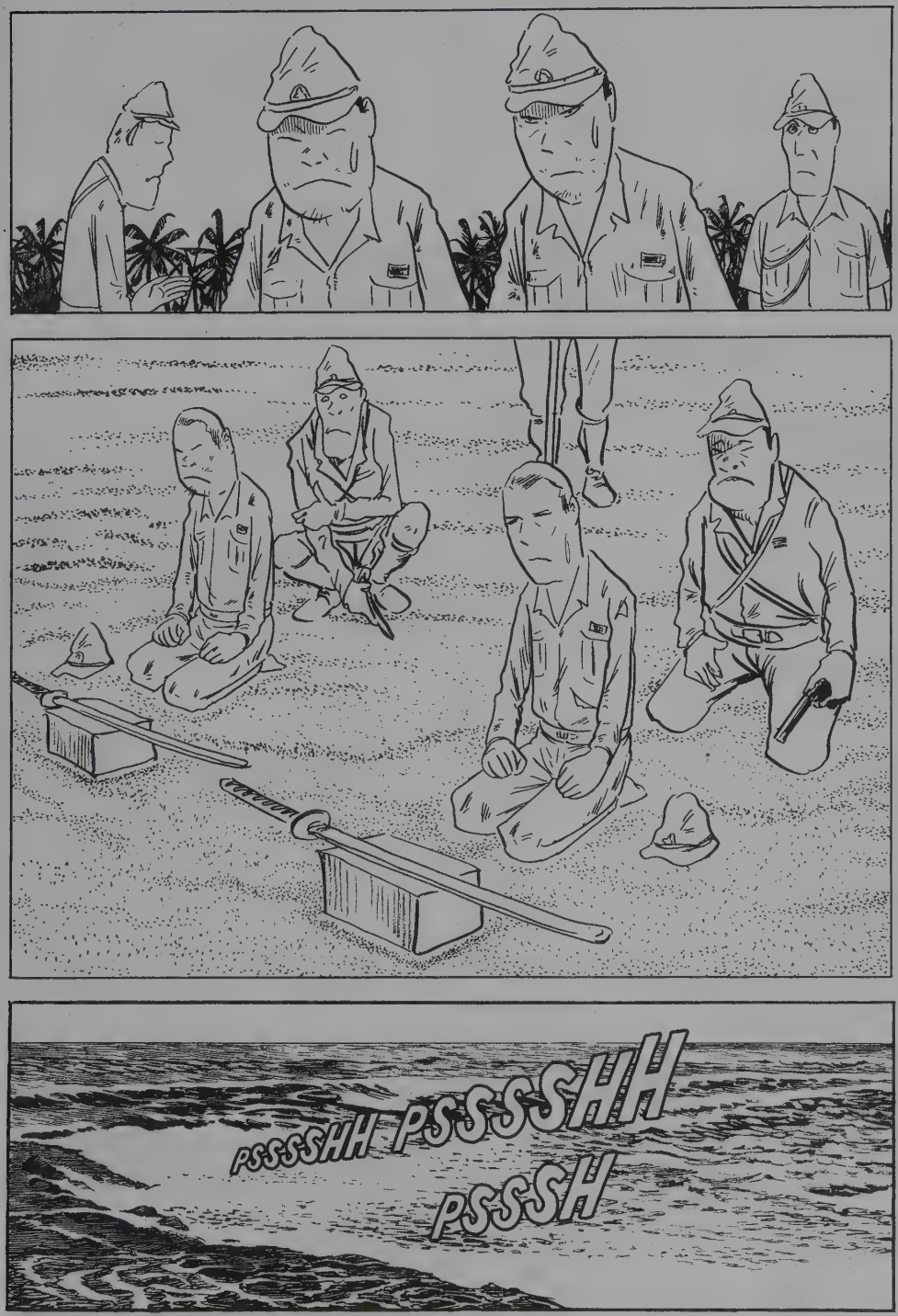
WILL THEY BE TOLD WE DIED IN COMBAT?
...
I FORMALLY APOLOGIZE.
WELL THEN...
I'LL MAKE SURE THEY ARE.
WE WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE IT IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND AS TO WITNESS OUR LAST MOMENTS AND TAKE CARE OF THINGS*.
I WILL TAKE MY LIFE IN ATONEMENT.

*SEE NOTES PAGE 367.

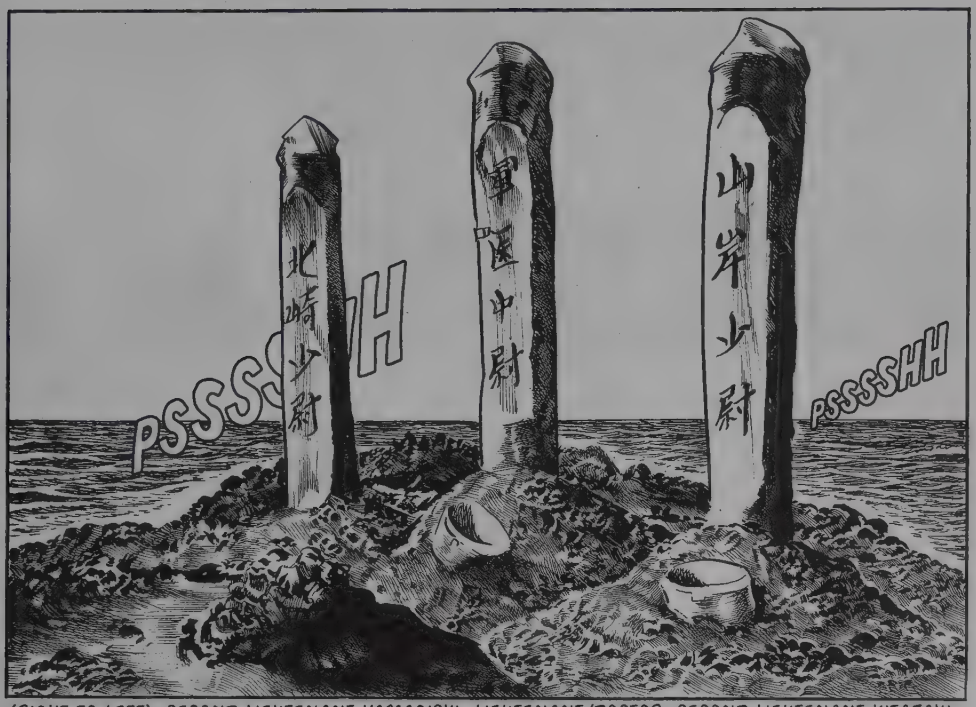
BANG
BANG

BURY THEM WITH THE DOCTOR HERE.
PSSSSHH
PSSSHH

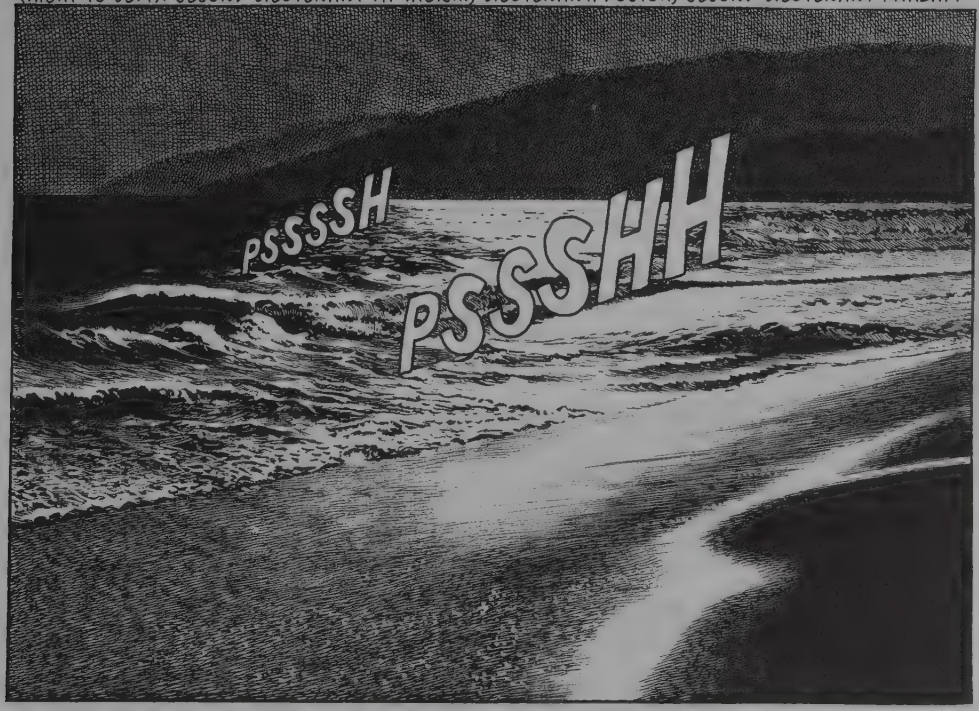
PSSSSHH
PSSSSHH

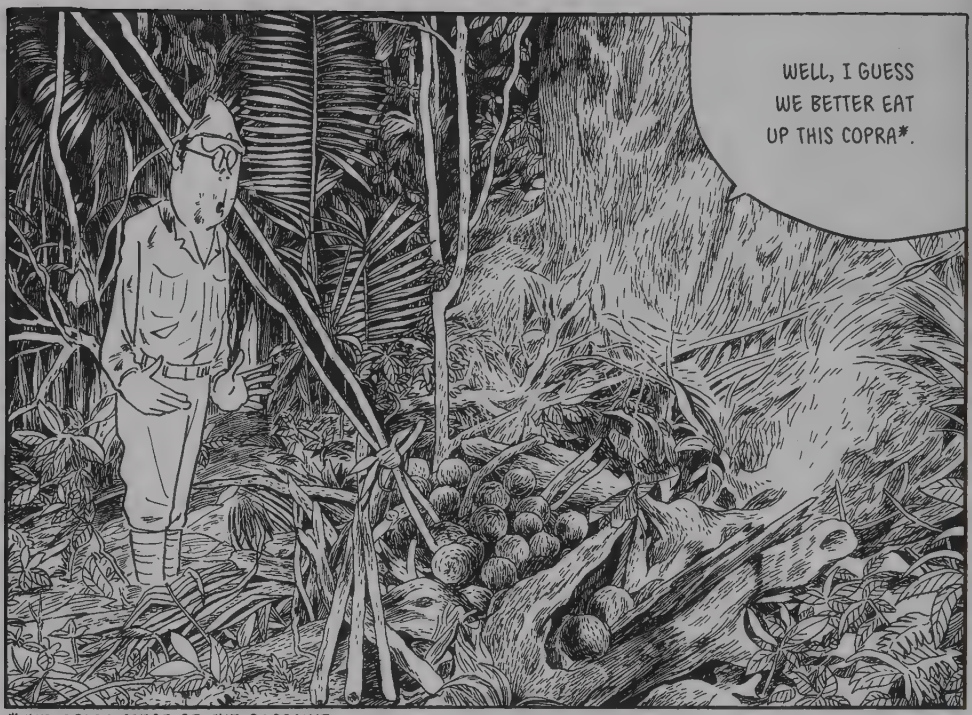

PSSSSHH
PSSSSHH
PSSSH

CAPE MASSACRE

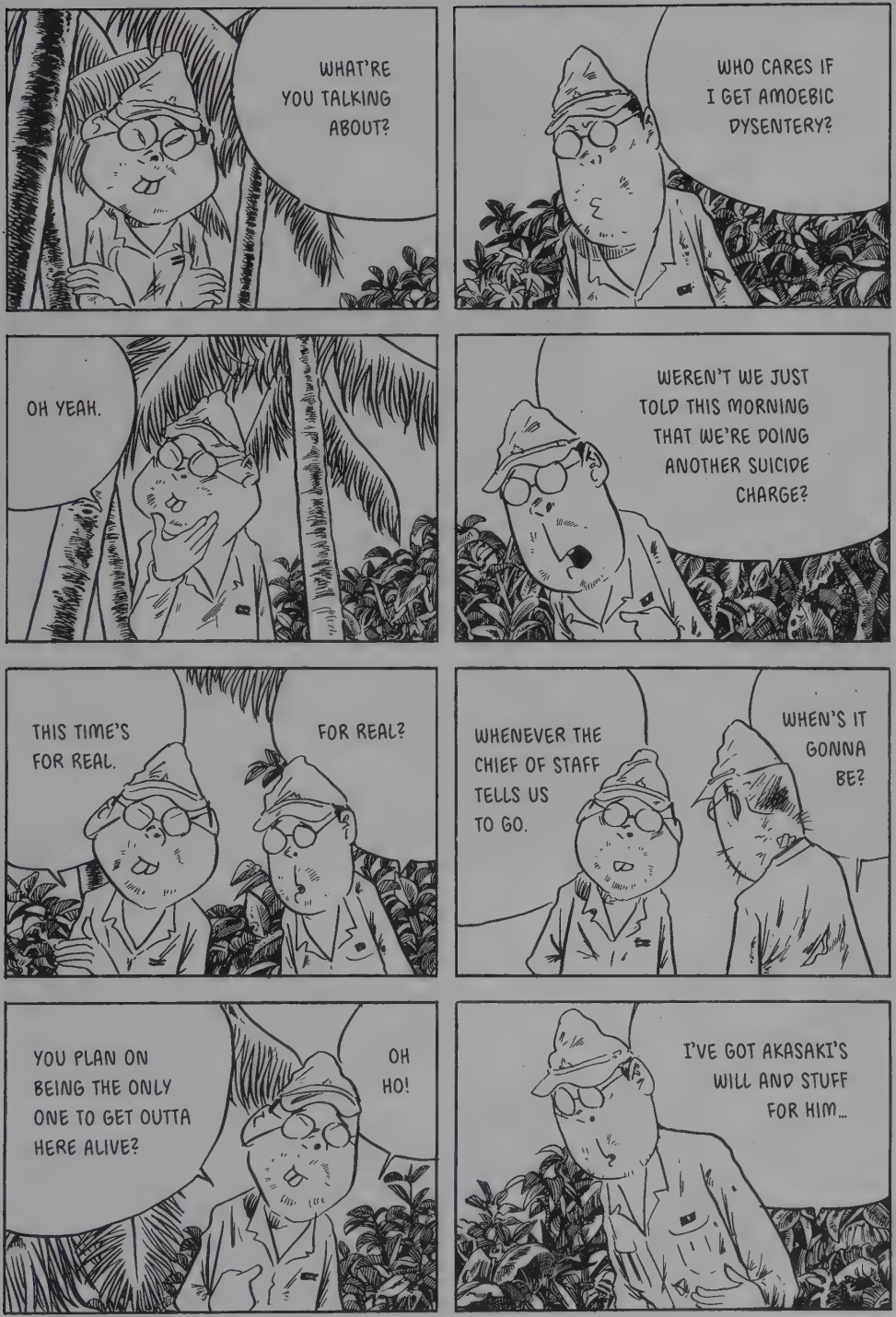


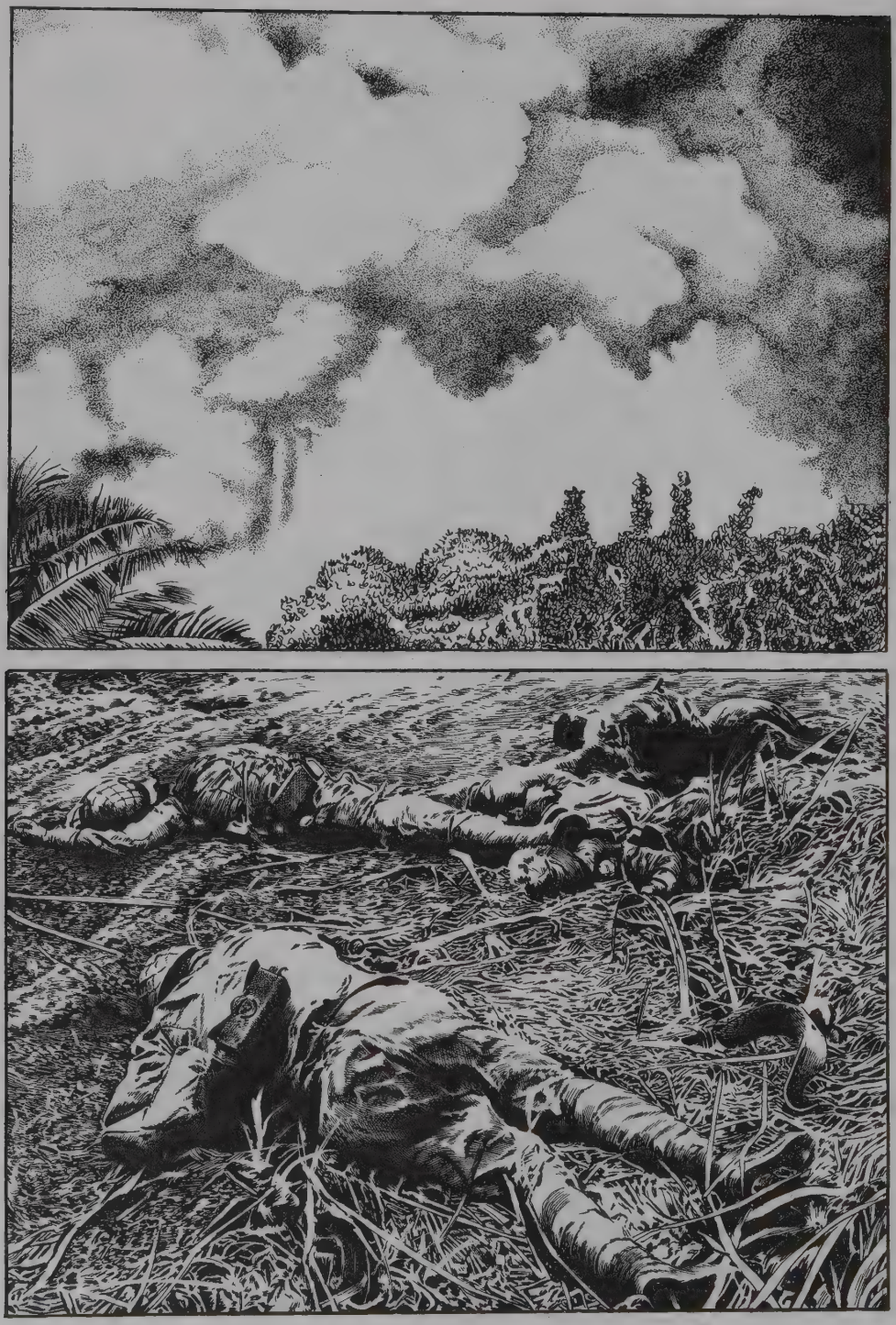
(RIGHT TO LEFT): SECOND LIEUTENANT YAMAGISHI; LIEUTENANT/DOCTOR; SECOND LIEUTENANT KITAZAKI

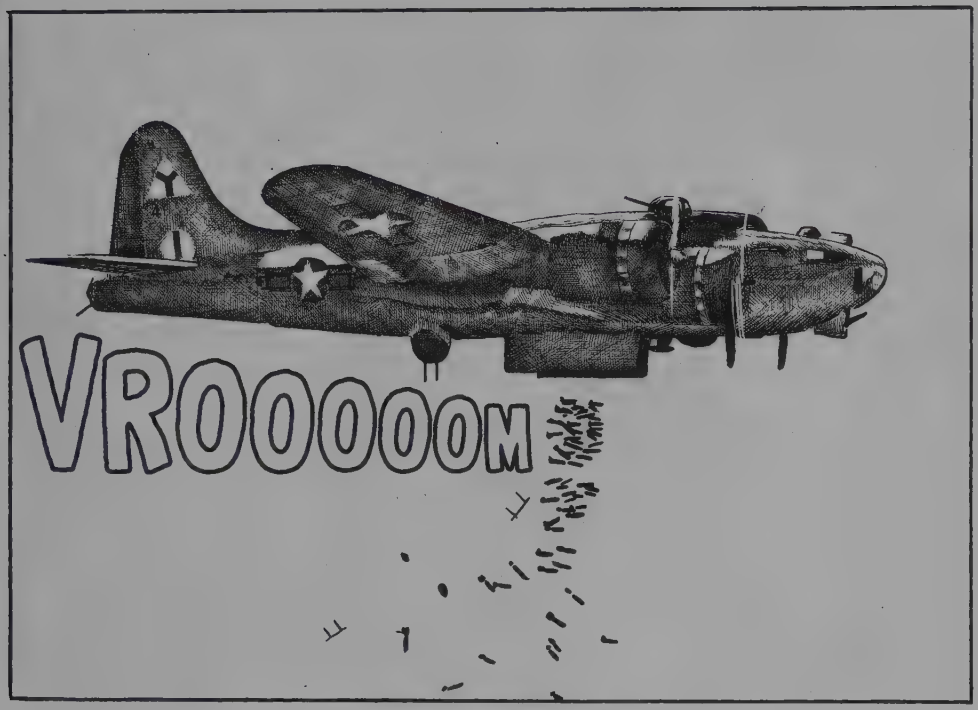




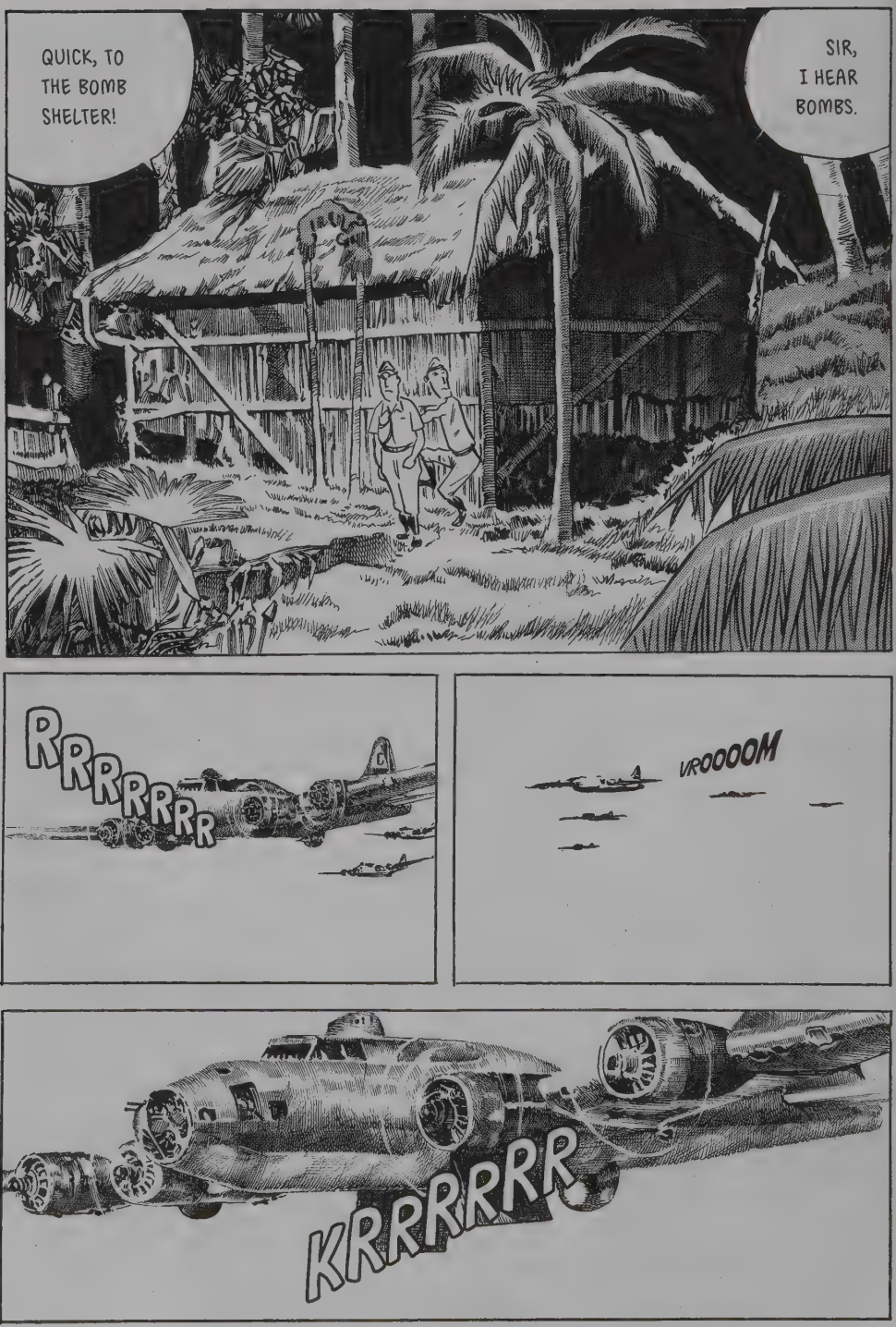
*THE DRIED MEAT OF THE COCONUT.


WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WHO CARES IF I GET AMOEBIC DYSENTERY?
OH YEAH.
WEREN'T WE JUST TOLD THIS MORNING THAT WE'RE DOING ANOTHER SUICIDE CHARGE?
THIS TIME'S FOR REAL.
FOR REAL?
WHENEVER THE CHIEF OF STAFF TELLS US TO GO.
WHEN'S IT GONNA BE?
YOU PLAN ON BEING THE ONLY ONE TO GET OUTTA HERE ALIVE?
OH HO!
I'VE GOT AKASAKI'S WILL AND STUFF FOR HIM...

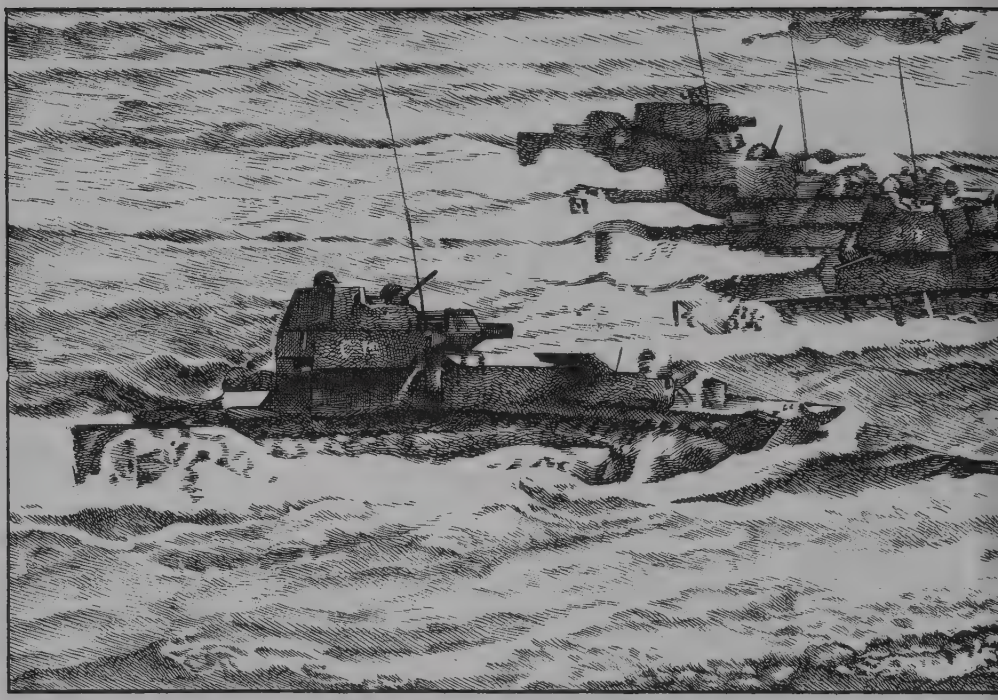


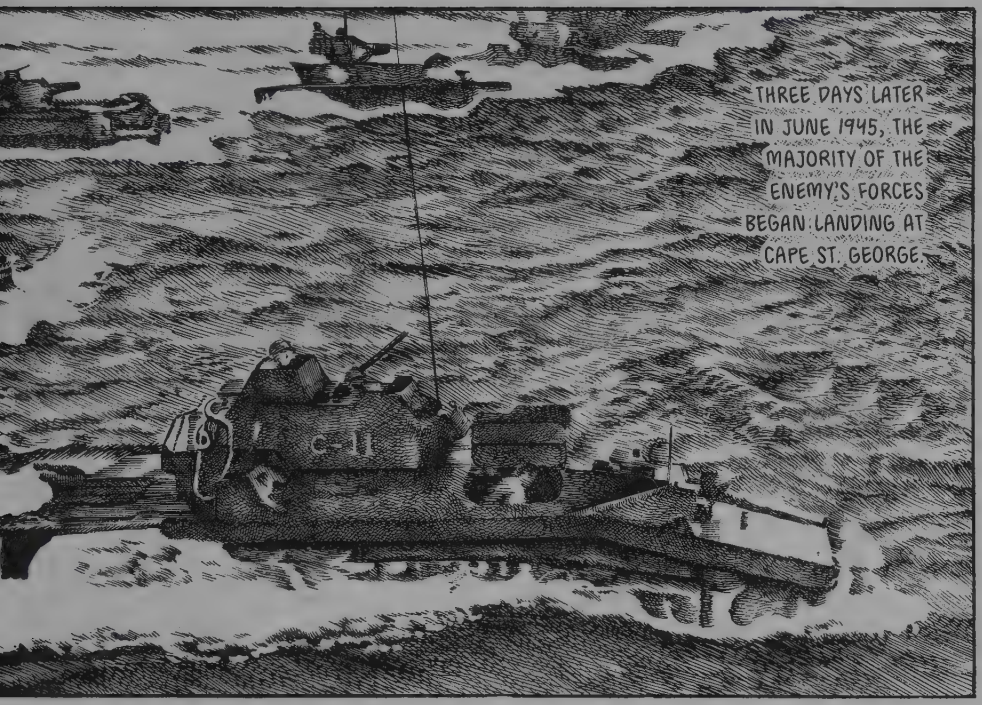

VROOOOOOM

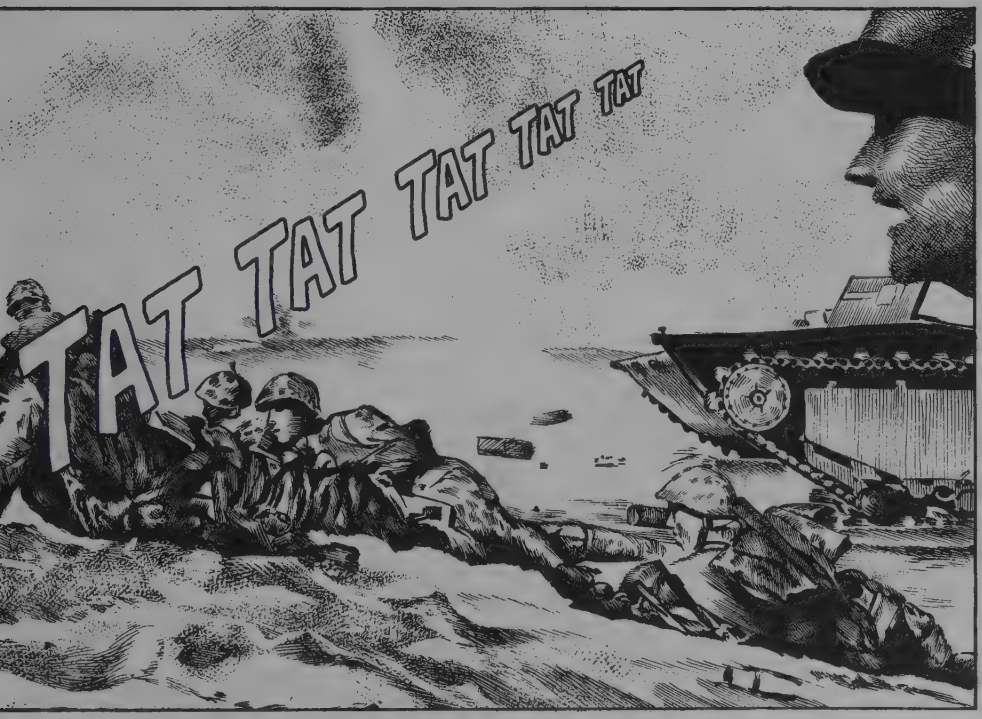
BOOM

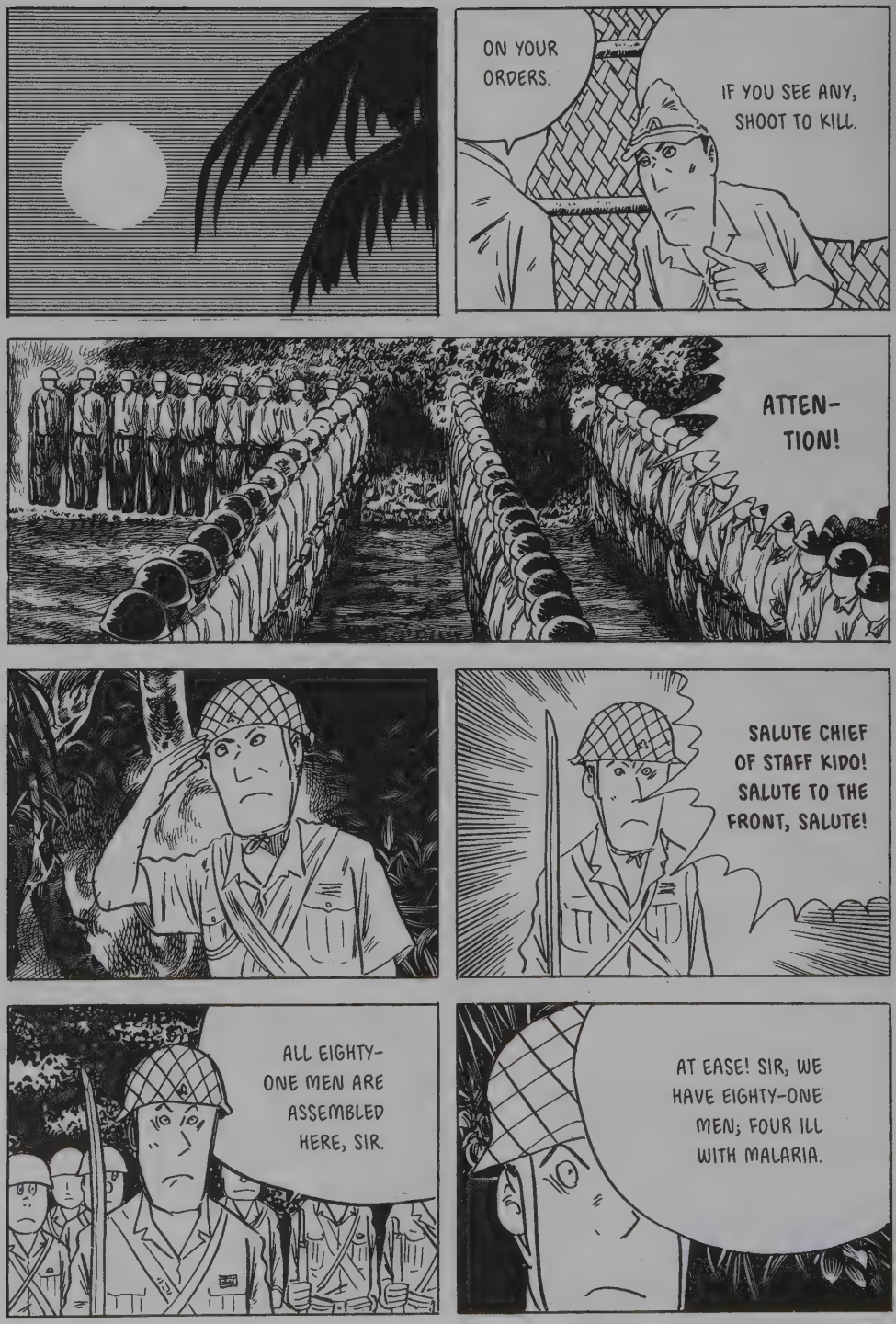

QUICK, TO THE BOMB SHELTER!
SIR, I HEAR BOMBS.
RRRRRRRR
VROOOOM
KRRRRRRR

FIVE MEN?!
SIR, FIVE OF OUR SENTRIES DIED IN THE SURPRISE BOMBING.
WE HAVE TO MAKE THE ATTACK SOON.
I CAME HERE EXPRESSLY TO PREVENT THESE MEN FROM HAVING TO DIE LIKE DOGS, AND TO WHAT END?
THE GENERAL IS ALSO WAITING...

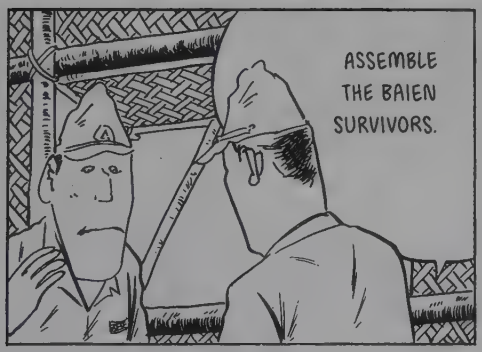



THREE DAYS LATER IN JUNE 1945, THE MAJORITY OF THE ENEMY'S FORCES BEGAN LANDING AT CAPE ST. GEORGE.

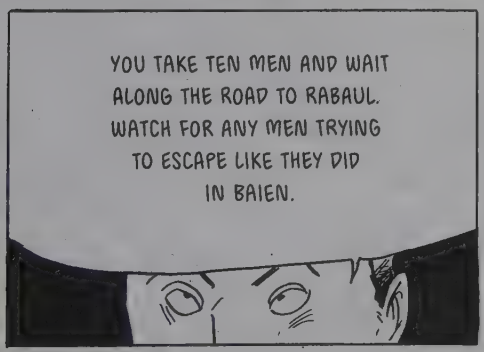

TAT TAT TAT TAT TAT


ON YOUR ORDERS.
IF YOU SEE ANY, SHOOT TO KILL.
ATTEN-TION!
SALUTE CHIEF OF STAFF KIDO! SALUTE TO THE FRONT, SALUTE!
ALL EIGHTY-ONE MEN ARE ASSEMBLED HERE, SIR.
AT EASE! SIR, WE HAVE EIGHTY-ONE MEN; FOUR ILL WITH MALARIA.

BOOOM


ASSEMBLE THE BAIEN SURVIVORS.

IT SEEMS THAT THE TIME FOR THE SUICIDE CHARGE HAS FINALLY COME.

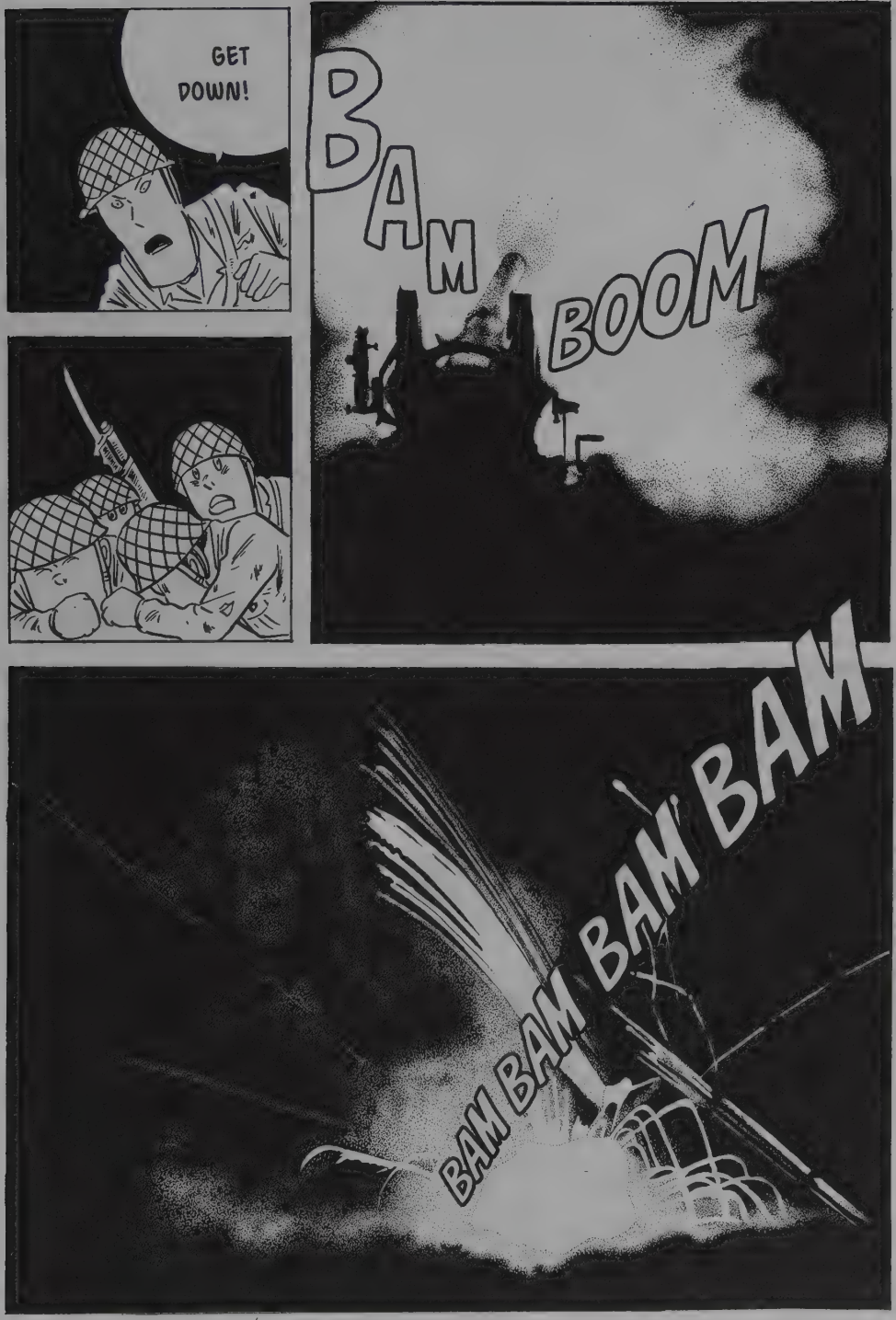

YOU TAKE TEN MEN AND WAIT ALONG THE ROAD TO RABAUL. WATCH FOR ANY MEN TRYING TO ESCAPE LIKE THEY DID IN BAIEN.

YES, SIR.
I'LL TAKE THE COMMAND.

MOVE OUT!

NCOS WILL LEAD SQUADS OF TEN MEN EACH.
WE WILL SURPRISE THE ENEMY WITH A REAR ATTACK AND FIGHT TO THE DEATH.
YES, SIR!
MIZUMOTO, WE WILL PROCEED TOGETHER.
BOW IN FAREWELL TOWARDS OUR BELOVED HOMELAND.
FIX BAYONETS!
SOLDIERS! BOW TO THE RIGHT! RIGHT!

MEN, FIGHT THIS FINAL BATTLE WITH COURAGE!
ALL SECTIONS, ATTACK!
YA
AAH


GET DOWN!
BAM BOOM
BAM BAM BAM BAM

IS YOUR SPIRIT FALTERING?
KEEP THE ENEMY AHEAD OF YOU.
TAKE COMMAND.
MY DUTY IS TO REPORT BACK TO THE GENERAL.
NO, SIR. AND YOU?
IT IS REGRETFUL, BUT I HAVE THE COLD DUTY TO SEE YOUR SUICIDE CHARGE OFF.
SO YOU WERE NOT PLANNING TO DIE WITH US, SIR?

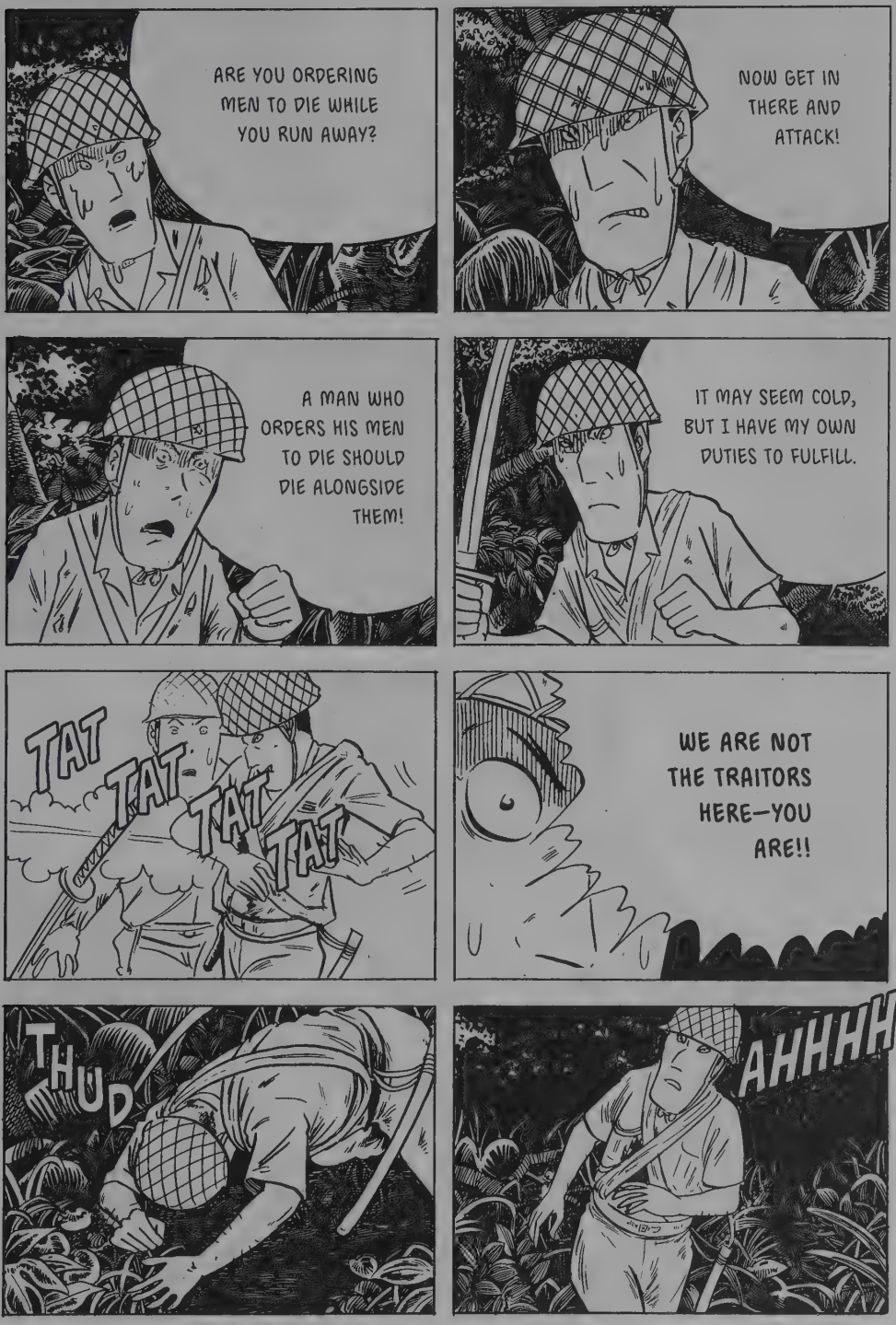
TAT TAT TAT TAT TAT

AHHHH
AUGH

SIR?

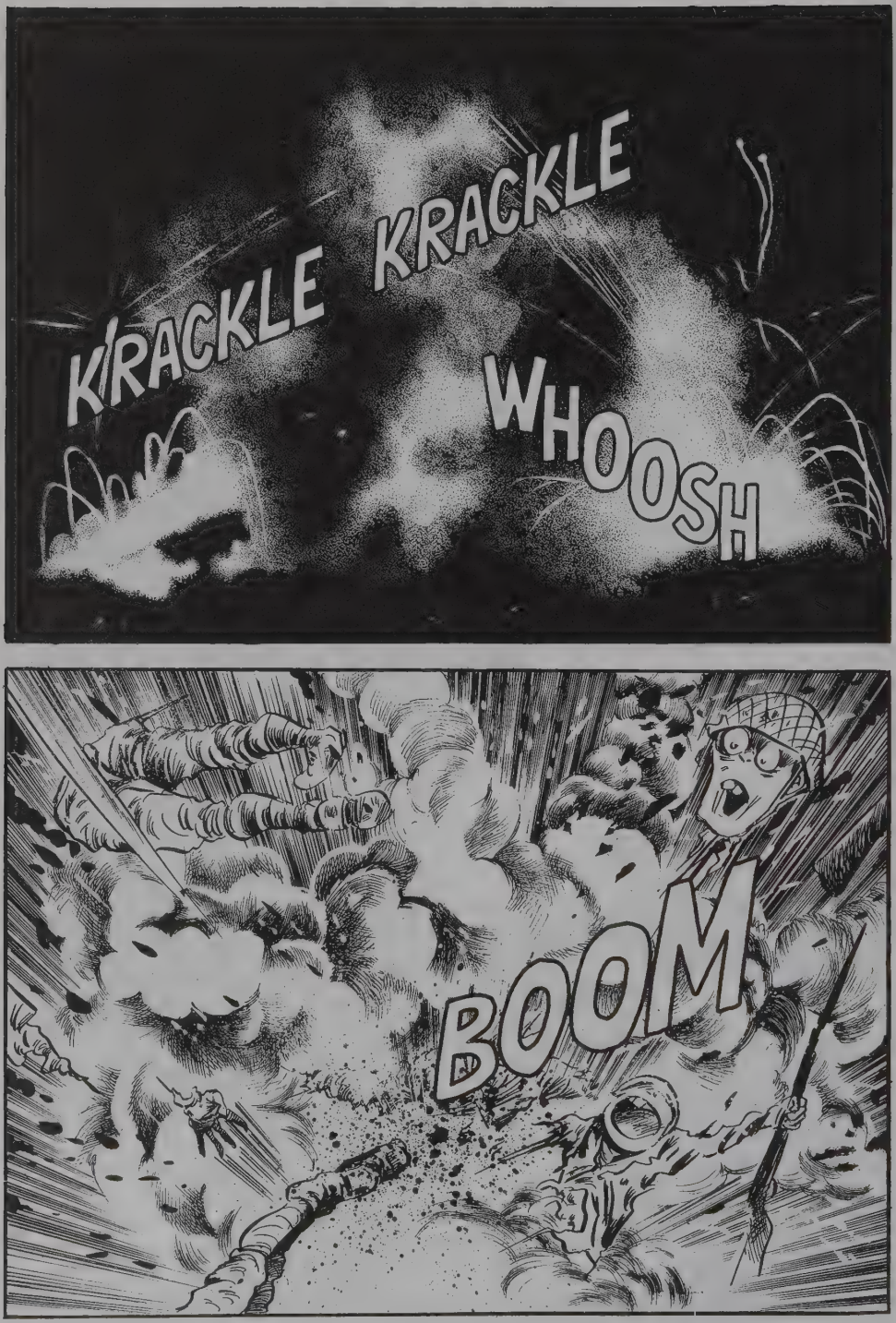
MIZUMOTO,
I'M GIVING YOU
THE COMMAND.

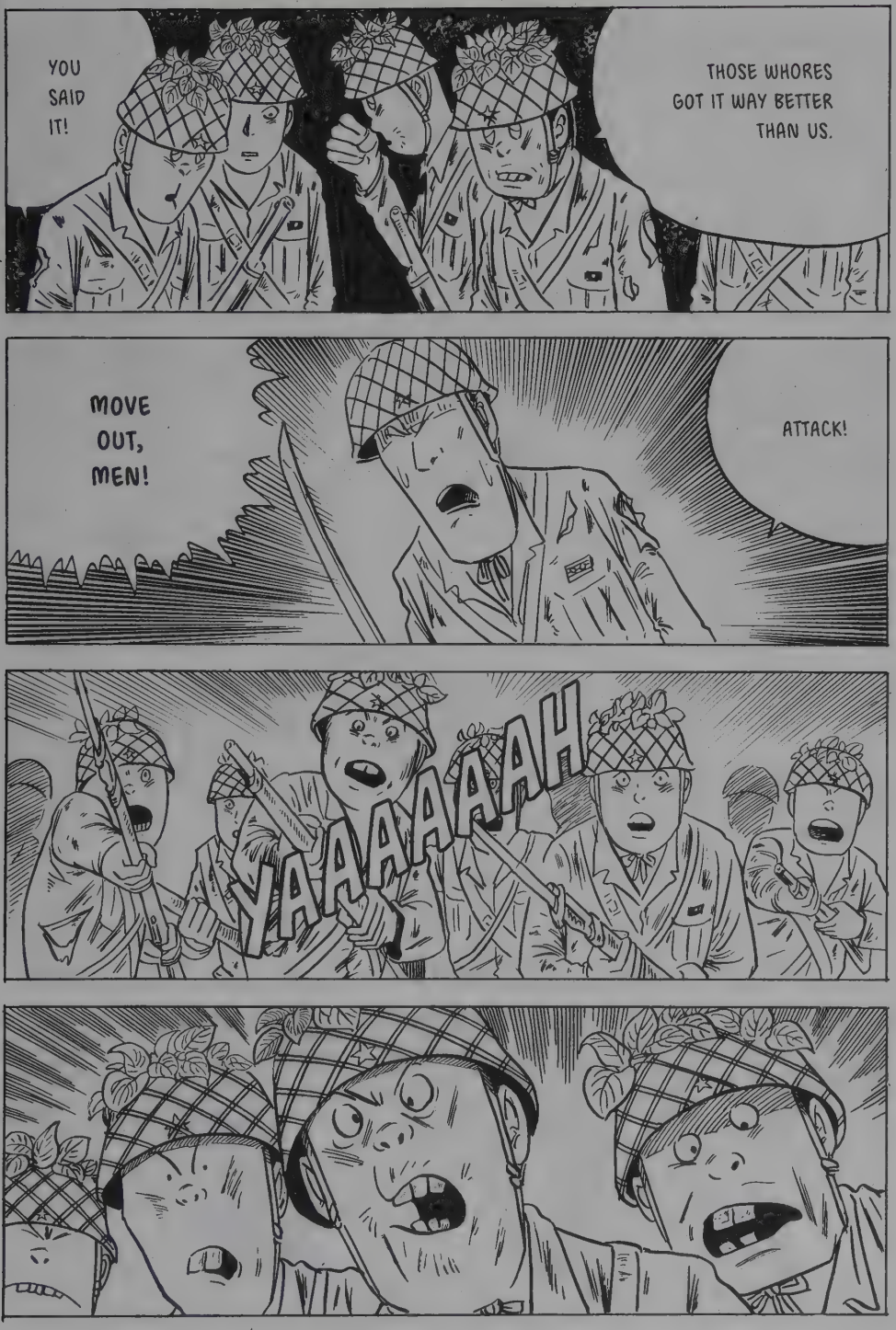
MIZUMOTO, I HAVE FINISHED MY WORK HERE.
SIR!
...
TAKE THE COMMAND AND ATTACK.
IT'S TIME FOR US TO CHARGE!
YOU SEE THAT, MEN?
LET'S SING A FINAL SONG BEFORE WE DIE.

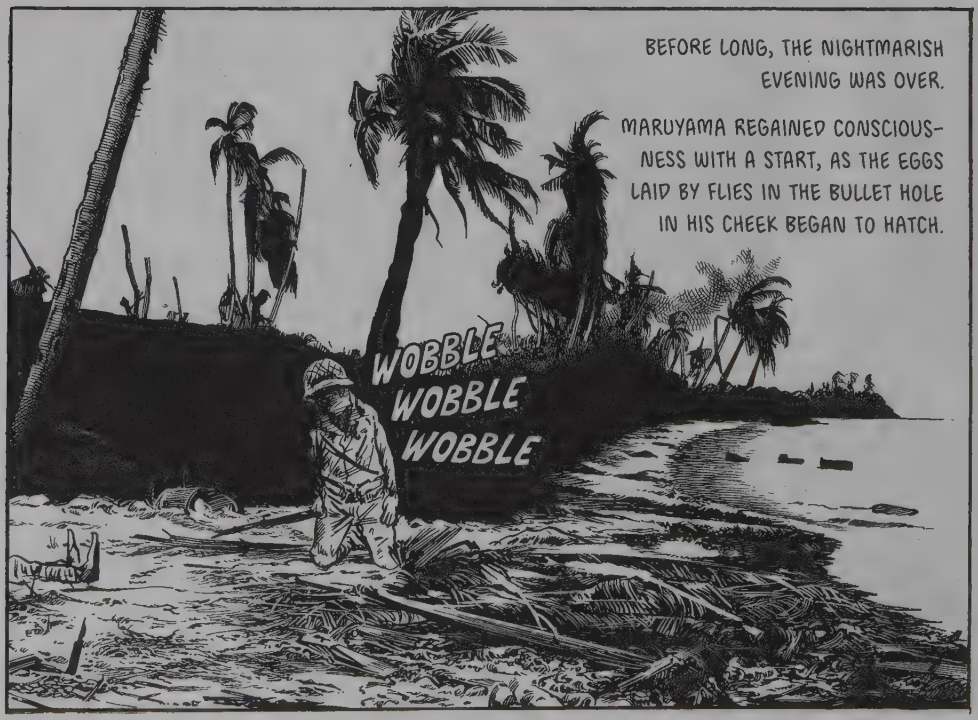

ARE YOU ORDERING MEN TO DIE WHILE YOU RUN AWAY?
NOW GET IN THERE AND ATTACK!
A MAN WHO ORDERS HIS MEN TO DIE SHOULD DIE ALONGSIDE THEM!
IT MAY SEEM COLD, BUT I HAVE MY OWN DUTIES TO FULFILL.
TAT TAT- TAT TAT
WE ARE NOT THE TRAITORS HERE—YOU ARE!!
THUD
AHHHH

WORKING THIS
SHITTY JOOOOB

WHY AAAAM I STUUUUUCK

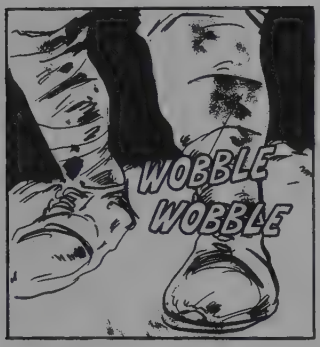

KRACKLE KRACKLE
WHOOSH
BOOM


YOU SAID IT!
THOSE WHORES GOT IT WAY BETTER THAN US.
MOVE OUT, MEN!
ATTACK!
YAAAAAAH

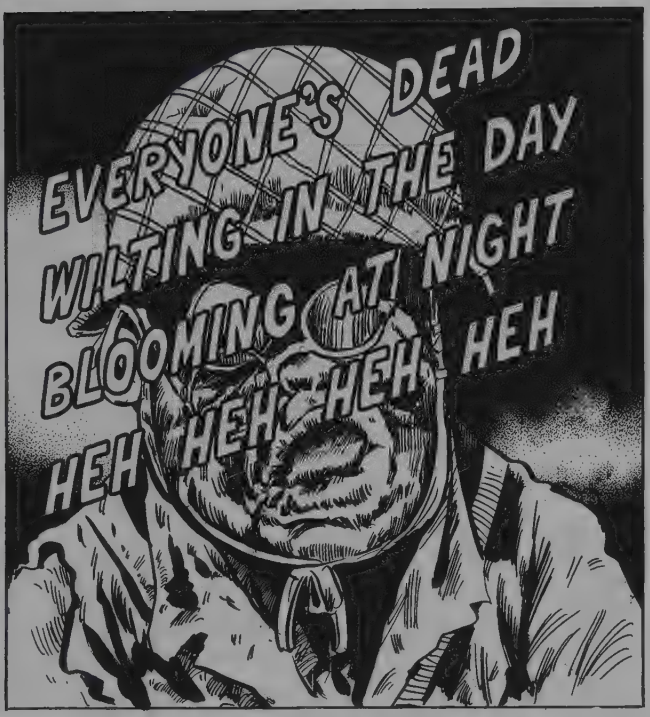

BEFORE LONG, THE NIGHTMARISH EVENING WAS OVER.
MARUYAMA REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS WITH A START, AS THE EGGS LAID BY FLIES IN THE BULLET HOLE IN HIS CHEEK BEGAN TO HATCH.
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
WOBBLE

KKKKKKK

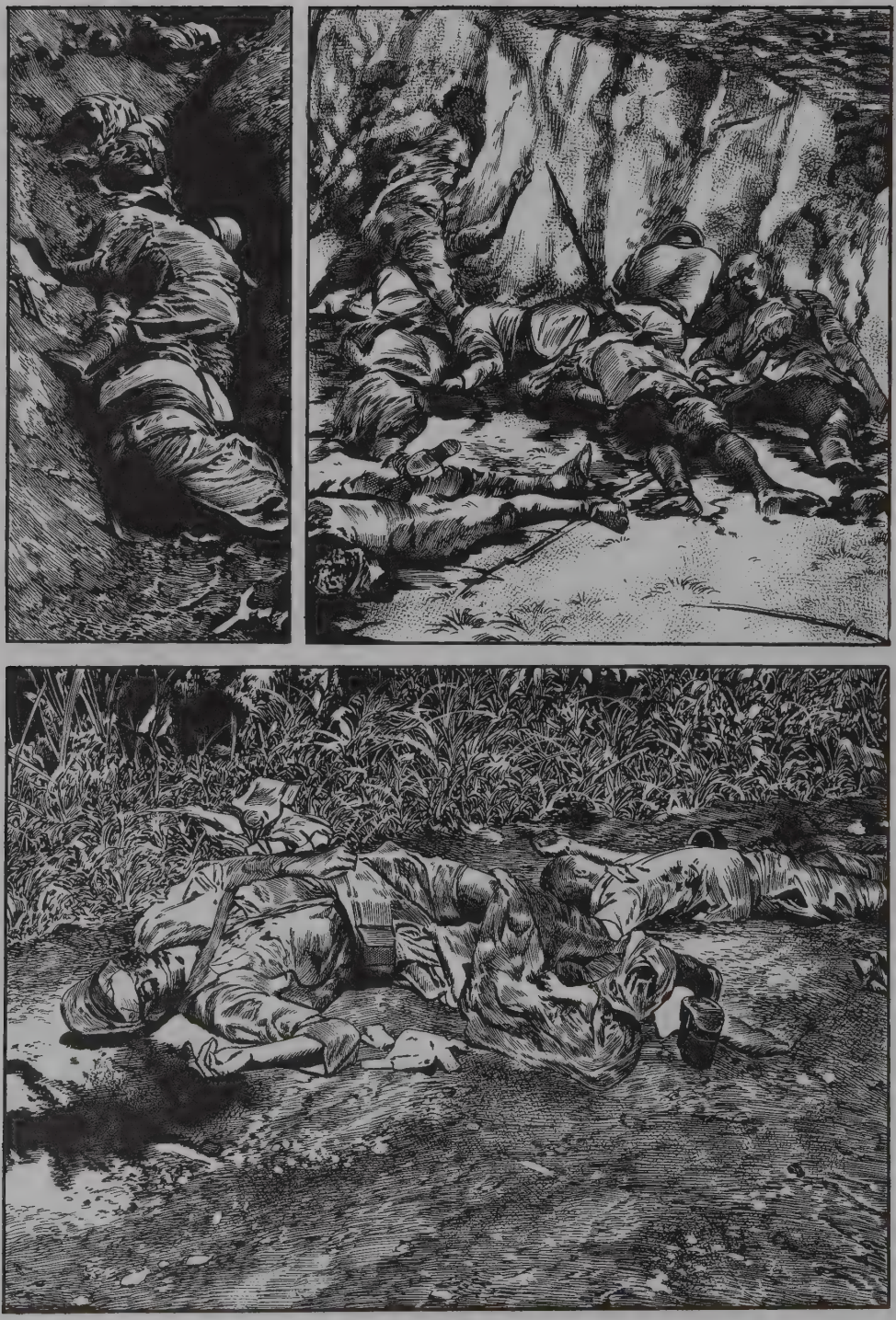
HEH
HEH
HEH
HEH
BLAM
A JAP!
NGGH...


WOBBLE
WOBBLE

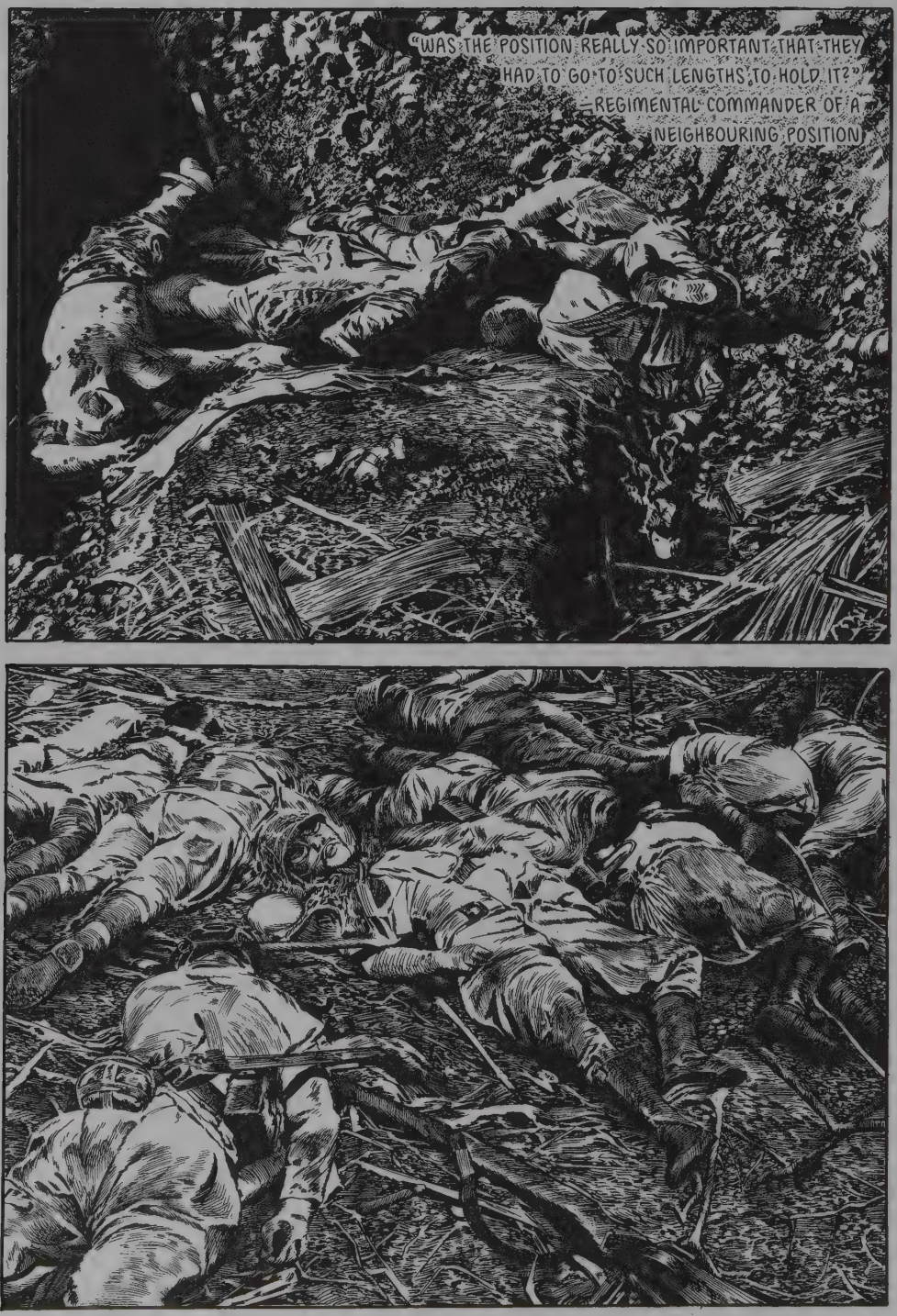
WOBBLE

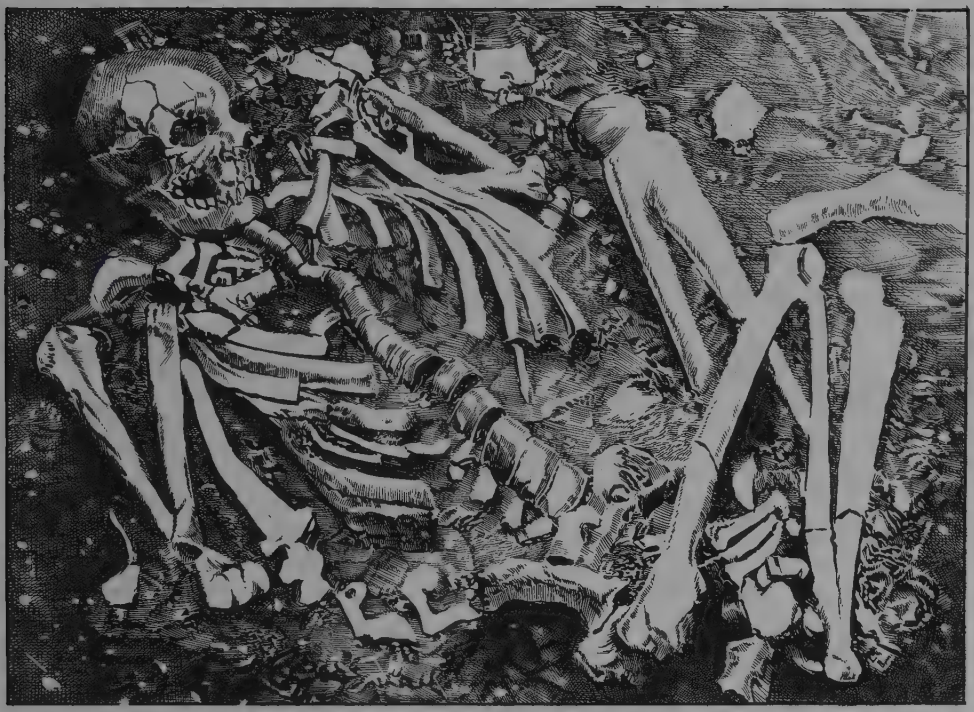

EVERYONE'S DEAD
WILTING IN THE DAY
BLOOMING AT NIGHT
HEH HEH HEH HEH

WHYYYYY
AAAAAAM I STUCK
THIS SHITTY JOB
WORKING



GUESS EVERYONE DIED FEELING LIKE THIS.
AAAH...
NO ONE TO TELL...JUST SLIPPING AWAY, FORGOTTEN...
WITH NO ONE WATCHING...


"WAS THE POSITION REALLY SO IMPORTANT THAT THEY HAD TO GO TO SUCH LENGTHS TO HOLD IT?"
—REGIMENTAL COMMANDER OF A NEIGHBOURING POSITION



122: Burdock root (*gobou*), a popular winter vegetable in Japan, is tough and woody when raw, but soft and sweet when cooked. It is said that when prisoners of war in Japan were given burdock to eat, they thought the Japanese were feeding them wood.

125: Amitabha Buddha is the principal figure in the Jodo Buddhism sect popular in Japan. In Jodo Buddhism, a strong belief in the Amitabha Buddha is considered the key to salvation, and calling the Buddha's name over and over is believed to summon the Buddha to one's aid.

204: "Noble death" is the Japanese *gyokusai*, which is also the "Noble Deaths" of the title, *Soin gyokusai seyo! Gyokusai* is made up of the Japanese characters for "jewel" and "shattered," and became a euphemism for suicide attack during World War II. A more literal translation of *Soin gyokusai seyo!* would be "All hands, let's die honorably," with the idea that an honorable death was only found on the battlefield. Superior officers exhorted their soldiers with this phrase during the last phases of the war, when a Japanese defeat was becoming clear. Japanese soldiers were strictly instructed to die rather than be taken prisoner.

218: Harbin is a city in Northeastern China which was occupied by the Japanese during World War II. The city is in a province that borders Russia and, at the time, had a large Russian population.

221: *Kapporé* is a type of dance that originated near the end of the Edo Period. The final vowel here is changed from "ay" to "ee" to follow the rhyme scheme in the Japanese version.

223: This is a poem by Edo period writer Motoori Norinaga taken by Imperial Army soldiers as inspiration in World War II. "Yamato spirit" is the nationalistic ideal of the Japanese spirit and was often referred to during World War II.

245: The date of a person's death is very important in Japanese culture due to the various observances that must be carried out on specific dates after death. These observances depend on local customs, but are often held on the seventh day after death, then the forty-ninth, and then the hundredth day, followed by annual services or services in set years.

326: In this kind of ritual suicide, the person committing suicide is generally expected to cut his abdomen while a second, or *kaishakunin*, stands behind him to finish the job so that the person committing suicide does not suffer unduly. Traditionally, this second cuts off the head of the suicide victim in a ritualized manner, but in modern times, the second usually shoots the suicide victim in the head.

NOTES

29: Dai-Nanko was the name given to the 14th century samurai Masashige Kusunoki when he was taken up as a patriotic hero after the Meiji Restoration. He was used as an inspiration for suicide missions during World War II due to the fact that he sacrificed his life for the sake of Emperor Go-Daigo. The Battle of Minato River was a decisive battle which Kusunoki lost, leading him to commit suicide.

46: New Year's, or *Oshogatsu*, is possibly the most important holiday in Japan. It is a time to spend with family, much like Christmas in Western countries, with businesses and shops traditionally closed for the first three days of the year.

51: These cards, *hanafuda*, are a type of traditional Japanese playing cards. One set is made up of four cards featuring flowers for each of the twelve months of the year, for a total of forty-eight cards. Interestingly, the game company Nintendo originally formed to produce *hanafuda* cards.

59: Hokkaido is the Japanese island north of the main island of Honshu. The indigenous Ainu people there generally have more hair and lighter skin than other Japanese people, and have been discriminated against within Japan for centuries.

77: The Martin B-26 Marauder was an American World War II bomber manufactured by the Glenn L. Martin Company. The type's first combat mission was a raid on the Japanese base at Rabaul on April 5, 1942. Some of the Marauders operating in the South Pacific were fitted with an additional machine gun in the nose.

85: The military police, or *Kempeitai*, were the bane of many Japanese people's existence during World War II. Known as the Gestapo of Japan, the *Kempeitai* brutalized Allied prisoners and captured foreign women to serve as "comfort women" in Japanese brothels, but they also kept tight watch on the Japanese people themselves, harshly punishing even the slightest infractions.

108: This is a World War II army song. *Hanami* refers to flower-viewing parties, in particular to cherry blossom (*sakura*) viewing parties. Every spring, Japanese people go to parks to sit under the flowering trees and eat and drink and generally enjoy the delicate blossoms.

115: According to Japanese Buddhist tradition, the Sanzu River, similar to the River Styx in Greek mythology, separates the land of the living from the spirit world. The deceased must cross this river after death, but the manner of crossing varies with the life they led.

In this story, everyone dies in the end, but I originally wanted one soldier to escape and report to the commander of the regiment holding the neighboring position. But it would have gotten too long, so I had everyone die in the suicide charge. The general in charge of the third mixed regiment actually said this about our suicide charge: "Why did they have to go to such lengths to hold that place?" All I could do when I heard this was heave an empty sigh. Such lengths to hold that place... What vain words these are, the dead have no mouths to tell.

Whenever I write a story about the war, I can't help the blind rage that surges up in me. My guess is, this anger is inspired by the ghosts of all those fallen soldiers.

Shigeru Mizuki
August 1991

*Translator's note: Peleliu is the island in the South Pacific where one of the bitterest campaigns of World War II was fought. A campaign that was expected to last four days dragged on for over two months, and resulted in some of the US's worst casualty rates. Most of the Japanese on the island were killed. An estimated ten thousand nine hundred Japanese soldiers were killed and 302 people taken prisoner, but of the prisoners, only seven were soldiers and twelve sailors. The rest were non-Japanese labourers.

AFTERWORD

SHIGERU MIZUKI

SUCH LENGTHS TO HOLD THAT PLACE...

Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths is 90 percent fact. The narrative has the chief of staff hit by a stray bullet and dying, and that is not true—he escaped quite handily at just the right moment. And in the story, everyone dies, but in reality, about eighty men survived.

You can't say to some members of a detachment, "We're all going to die later, so you guys go ahead and die now." No one would willingly accept that. I suppose all *gyokusai*, or suicide charges, are like this; there are always survivors. But the thing is, on Peleliu*, almost no one survived, so that became the standard. Those of us in Rabaul were often told to model ourselves after Peleliu. And if we had been on an island like Peleliu where everyone could die all at once, our suicide charge would have succeeded. But in the case of Rabaul, with a hundred thousand soldiers living quite comfortably at the rear, you can tell five hundred soldiers (maybe three or four hundred in reality) on the front to die, but you definitely won't get those five hundred men to consent to that.

In our military, soldiers and socks were consumables; a soldier ranked no higher than a cat. But when it came to death, it turns out we were human beings after all. "Even a worm will turn," as the old saying goes, and I believe that a suicide charge simply can't succeed without the tacit agreement of every soldier in the group.

Our newly assigned 27-year-old battalion commander may have been a wonderful guy when you got to know him, but he was much too young to command nearly five hundred men, each with his own individual will. The "chief of staff" was the one who gave the commander this order, rather than leaving him to come up with a suicide charge on his own, likely because the division commander above him was planning to tell the hundred thousand Rabaul soldiers, "Die here," and he intended to turn us into an example.

Officers, NCOs, horses, soldiers: in the military hierarchy, soldiers were not even thought of as human beings. We were instead creatures lower than a horse. I wonder if surviving the suicide charge wasn't, rather than an act of cowardice, one final act of resistance as a human being.

SM: I ran into my former commanding officer from the front at work, which led me to visit Rabaul after twenty-six years. That ended up being what made my desire to leave a record with *Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths* so strong. The details in the book are mostly from memory, but I also used some photographs and things from when I visited.

D&Q: What sort of critical reception did *Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths* receive in Japan when it was first published?

SM: It didn't really get that much attention, actually.

D&Q: You were one of the first artists to attempt to do serious, non-fiction manga with your biography of Adolf Hitler in 1971. Was doing this biography a step towards doing your own autobiographical works, which are still somewhat rare in Japan?

SM: I was intrigued by Hitler. There's no relationship between my writing about Hitler and my autobiographical works.

D&Q: What has formed the basis of your cultural influences? What other manga, films, books, etc., have inspired you?

SM: My influences cover a wide range of things, and I can't specifically point to one. It's probably better to answer that I don't have any.

Q&A WITH SHIGERU MIZUKI

This written interview was conducted in February 2011, a month before Shigeru Mizuki's 89th birthday, with the invaluable assistance of Maki Hakui, Christopher Butcher, and Jocelyne Allen.

Drawn & Quarterly: You've used your cartooning and status to address the war, starting with themes in *Akuma-kun*, and moving to aggressively criticizing Japan's role in World War II, and war in general. What prompted you to begin directly addressing Japan's role in the war with your manga?

Shigeru Mizuki: I've drawn a variety of war manga, but with *Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths*, what prompted me was the feeling that I wanted to leave a record of this significant event. My thoughts about war have not changed.

D&Q: Was there anything, beyond your personal experiences, that inspired you to create a graphic novel on the war? One of the extraordinary aspects of this book is that, when it was first published in 1973, there were virtually no other graphic novels, in any country, taking on such a serious subject with this level of ambition and scope. Were you aware at the time that this was such a groundbreaking work, not just in Japan, but in the world as well?

SM: I wasn't aware that it was a pioneering work. I was just single-minded in my desire to write it.

D&Q: In your afterword for this book, you note that the events recounted here are "90 percent fact." Was there anything from your experiences in the war that you felt that you could not include in this book, either because it was too sensitive politically or because it compromised the privacy of any of the other survivors from your group?

SM: There was nothing in particular that I hesitated to write about.

D&Q: You note that, unlike the ending portrayed in this book, about eighty men had, in fact, survived the battle. Have you maintained a friendship with any of your fellow survivors?

SM: I haven't had much contact with my war buddies since I came back to Japan. The ones that I was really close with all died in the war.

D&Q: The landscapes and overall scenery portrayed here are masterfully drawn and characterized by an intense realism. What sort of visual references did you use? Was this primarily drawn from memory (or reference photographs) or at any point did you travel back to the island of New Britain?

D&Q: Your body of work appears to stand out beyond much of the manga that has come out of Japan over the last thirty years or so. In particular, books such as *Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths* and *NonNonBâ* are distinguished by an intense personal vision that seems uncharacteristic of much of contemporary commercial manga. Do you feel that your work shares a greater affinity with other *manga-ka* [Japanese cartoonists] of an earlier era? Do you read any current or recent manga works?

SM: I don't feel there is any affinity with any particular *manga-ka*. I don't read recent manga.

D&Q: How long did it take you to write and draw this book? Was it serialized in any form (magazines, newspapers) or was it published upon completion as one entity?

SM: It took almost no time to plan it. I finished writing it in a short period. My strong feeling of wanting to write it, of needing to write it, forced me to do so.

D&Q: In your career as a *manga-ka*, you have tackled a wide range of subject matter, from the events in this book that relate to your own experiences in the war, to the supernatural elements in *Akuma-kun* and *NonNonBâ,* to the biography of Hitler. Do you have a work that you are most proud of? For English-speaking readers encountering your work for the first time, what other books after *Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths* would you recommend?

SM: I would have to say *GeGeGe no Kitarô*.

D&Q: It would be something of an understatement to say that your work is long overdue for publication in English. Given the scope of your influence and accomplishments in Japan, it's very surprising that this is the first time that your work is being translated into English. How do you feel about *Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths* being published in North America for the first time?

SM: I'm extremely happy about it. I hope readers will come to understand the feelings of the Japanese soldiers fighting on the foremost lines of the battlefield.

This book is presented in the traditional Japanese manner and is meant to be read from right to left. The cover at the opposite end is considered the front of the book.

To begin reading, please flip over and start at the other end with the Introduction and make your way "backwards" through the text pages. Once you arrive at the comics section, start at the top right hand corner and read the panels (and the word balloons) from right to left. Continue on to the next row and repeat.

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FROM THE PREEMINENT AND MOST FAMOUS LIVING JAPANESE CARTOONIST

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY FREDERIK L. SCHODT

ONWARD TOWARDS OUR NOBLE DEATHS IS A FICTIONALIZED MEMOIR OF Shigeru Mizuki's time served in the Imperial Army in World War II. Set against the tropical island backdrop of the South Pacific, the story explores the camaraderie of the troops dealing not only with the nightmarish realities of war like hunger, disease and death, but also the devastating consequences of the *gyokusai* dictate of the Imperial Army—that one must die for their country at all costs, if not in battle then by suicide. Balancing humor and horror, realism and cartooning, Mizuki deftly addresses and critiques the moral depravity of war. First published in 1973, this groundbreaking graphic novel was one of the first fully formed accounts of war told in the comics format, and remains equally compelling almost forty years later. Mizuki has been published around the world and is one of the best known and lauded artists in Japan; there is even a popular daily television show about him and his wife. This is his first book to be translated into English.

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